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East edition No 749

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Will 'super' council see KCC into an early grave?

A MERGER of four east Kent councils is hugely significant. Not just for what it will mean in potentially just two short years, but how it could shape the future of our democratic process and provision of services.

While Kent County Council has made lots of supportive noises about the merger proposals (see p14), there must be at least a little uncomfortable shifting in the seats of power in County Hall.

Because should it prove effective, and should the 'super' council start to grow in confidence, the prospect of it establishing itself as its own unitary authority - similiar to Medway's breakaway in 1998 - will surely be too tempting for its constituent parts to ignore.

In the past, KCC has got itself so hot under the collar over the thought of another major fragmentation of its influence, leader Paul Carter's neck almost catches fire. But now it is having to watch on as what could yet prove to be the biggest single threat to its existence moves with remarkable pace through the process of consultation and establishment.

Of course, it may just exist as the biggest component part of KCC, but with around a third of the county's population under its wing, its clout will be considerable and KCC's decision-making process will have a formidable foe should it decide to rule against it. It will surely have some influence in that regard.

The decision by the four councils is a brave one and, sadly, a necessary one in an era of Whitehall funding become far more famine than feast.

There is so much to discuss and debate before it occurs, but with each move its impact in 10 or 20 years should never be overlooked or ignored.

This could, just could, be the beginning of the end of Kent's two-tier local government structure once and for all.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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Jailed for leaving teen 'to drown' after pier tumble

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

GUILTY: Michael Bowditch will serve five-and-a-half years after the death of 17-year-old Becky Anne Morgan

A 21-year-old has been convicted of manslaughter after he left a teenager to drown in the sea.

Michael Bowditch, of Prestedge Avenue, Ramsgate, was sentenced at Maidstone Crown Court on Thursday to five-and-a-half-years behind bars after pleading guilty to the manslaughter of 17-year-old Becky Anne Morgan.

He had left her to drown after she fell from Ramsgate Pier after a night out. He then continued his night out before calling the police hours later.

Bowditch must serve half of his sentence in prison before being considered for licence.

On May 1 last year, Bowditch called police just after 5am to report that he had watched Miss Morgan drown in the sea near Ramsgate Pier two or three hours earlier.

The pair had met earlier that night at a party and had left their friends in a pub so they could walk along and sit on the harbour arm.

Bowditch told police they had been 'mucking about' when Miss Morgan had fallen into the sea.

Her body was eventually recovered off the coast of Broadstairs at around 7.45am.

An investigation found after leaving Miss Morgan to drown, Bowditch was seen in a bar at around 2.50am – more than two hours before he called police – when he appeared very drunk and was trying to chat up girls. He was thrown out by door staff 20 minutes later.

Toxicology tests showed Bowditch had cocaine, alcohol and cannabinoids in his bloodstream, with alcohol said to have been at a "very high level".

Sentencing Bowditch, Judge Jeremy Carey said many people would find his inaction "repugnant".

The judge told him: "You did not try in any way to help a drowning girl - not by throwing her a life buoy, not by going to her aid as some would have done, not by calling for help, not by contacting the rescue or emergency services.

"In other words, you left her to drown."

Det Sgt Fiona Mattholie said: "Despite a comprehensive investigation by officers, there is only one person who will ever really know the full details of what happened that night to cause a 17-year-old girl to lose her life. Bowditch has now admitted he did play a part in her death and was guilty of manslaughter by gross negligence."

'Sexual predator', 80, jailed for 30 years of preying on children

POLICE have described a pensioner from Tunbridge Wells who raped and abused young children over a period spanning more than 30 years, as a "dangerous sexual predator" after he was sentenced to 18 years in jail.

Mark Humphreys, now 80, would give his victims biscuits or milk after abusing them, whilst warning them not to tell anyone.

Between 1965 and 1996, Humphreys, of Cherry Tree Road, systematically abused victims as young as three years old at an address in Tunbridge Wells and in Sleaford, Sussex.

Humphreys was arrested after one of his victims approached police in March 2015. As well as the sexual abuse the victim alleged he would beat her, leaving her with welt marks on her legs and backside.

After an extensive investigation, Humphreys was charged by Kent Police with a number of offences, relating to three victims, who were all under the age of 16 at the time.

Appearing at Maidstone Crown Court, Humphreys denied two charges of rape, five counts of indecent assault and four counts of indecency with a child. He also pleaded not guilty to two other serious sex offences.

After the case went to a trial, a jury later found him guilty on all counts and he was this week sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment.

Detective constable Claire Bassett of Kent Police's child sexual exploitation team said: "Humphreys repeatedly subjected his victims to depraved and sickening abuse, causing incalculable damage upon their young and later adult lives. He is a dangerous sexual predator who also lied about his crimes and forced his victims to endure a harrowing trial, but who thankfully has now finally been punished.

"Thanks largely to the tremendous bravery of his victims, justice has now been served and Humphreys will serve a long time in prison. I would like to personally thank them all for having the courage."

KCC begins consultation on smaller lorry park strategy

A NUMBER of small lorry parks are being considered by highways chiefs at Kent County Council to help alleviate the blight of illegal parking.

The proposed parks would be run as a private and public partnership and KCC says it will work closely with the private sector to identify what funding options exist to deliver the sites, the authority said on Friday.

Leader Paul Carter said: ''These illegally parked lorries are a blight on the county, anti-social and dangerous.

''If we put these plans in place and drivers have somewhere safe and secure to park overnight.''

It comes as KCC launches a consultation into overnight lorry parking.

Doubts over garden village plans after council debate

Planning officials in Sevenoaks have decided not to recommend a 3,000 home 'garden village'.

In its master vision for Swanley and Hextable's development over the next 20 years, the district council had put forward the development, which could include a new, smaller 'halt' train station, as an alternative to town's main station.

But on Wednesday the council's planning advisory committee unanimously recommendeded the council throws out the proposal, over residents' fears the development could be built on green belt land.

Further consultations take place in the summer before a meeting of Sevenoaks council's cabinet in February where the committee's views will be taken into account.

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Petition gathers speed to reduce limit to 30mph

CAMPAIGNERS are backing a national movement to reduce the speed limit on rural roads to 30mph.

The Keep Chilmington Green campaign, opposed to the large housing development in Ashford, are throwing their weight behind a petition to slow down cars on country roads.

More than 2,200 people have signed the pledge thus far, but the group are still some 7,800 signatures shy of the issue being the subject of a government response.

A spokesperson for the campaign said: ''Increased traffic using badly maintained single track rural lanes as alternative routes and for commercial purposes is putting unacceptable pressure on the infrastructure and rural population.''

Parkway station plan is back on agenda to boost Thanet's regeneration

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

A PLANNING application for a new parkway train station in Thanet could be submitted as early as this year, as council chiefs this week released proposals for public consultation.

Kent County Council says the station will provide access to more employment opportunities for local residents using high speed rail services to London and other parts of Kent.

It will also improve investment opportunities at Discovery Park Enterprise Zone and surrounding business parks in Thanet, bringing jobs and prosperity to east Kent, council chiefs say.

The station would be built on the existing rail line between Minster and Ramsgate, and located to the west of the village of Cliffsend.

A parkway station primarily serves as a park and ride interchange and will be serviced by mainline and high speed services.

In early 2015, KCC carried out an eight week public consultation on the initial high level design, impact and benefits of Thanet Parkway.

PLANS: Parkway will look like this

Feedback from that consultation has been used to help refine the station design and the full consultation feedback report is also available on KCC's website.

KCC's transport chief, Matthew Balfour, said: "We're now looking to consult on the outline design of the station before submitting a planning application later in the year. Manston Business Park, EuroKent Business Park, Discovery Park Enterprise Zone and developments around Westwood Cross will benefit from being around an hour from London."

The consultation started on Wednesday and finishes on Sunday, March 19.

Road access is proposed from the A299 Hengist Way with additional pedestrian and cycle access via Cliffsend village and Cottington Road.

The proposed parkway station is designed to be unstaffed with two platforms and have a variety of facilities, including ticket vending machines and passenger help and information points offering remote assistance. There will also be a 300 space car park.

To take part in the consultation, visit KCC's website at www.kent.gov.uk/thanetparkway.

RETURN: Paul Hollywood

Bake Off set for return this year after deal

PAUL Hollywood will return to our screens this year in his role as judge on the Great British Bake Off, after it was confirmed the BBC had waived a legal clause preventing Channel 4 from creating a series until 2018.

The Kent baker, who lives near Canterbury, is the sole survivor of the main stars of the show since it sensationally switched from the BBC to Channel 4 last year in a deal worth an estimated £25m a year.

The show has been the biggest TV ratings hit in recent years, with Love Productions, which creates the programme, signing a deal in September for it to move channels.

That led to the departure of Mary Berry and presenters Mel Gidroyc and Sue Perkins.

It had been thought only a celebrity version would be aired in 2017.

The BBC quoted a source within the corporation as saying "we believe it would be undignified to have one public service broadcaster in a potential dispute with another and the associated costs for each party would ultimately come of programming budgets".

A BBC spokesman said it wished the show "well for the future".

Channel 4 confirmed the next series would be broadcast this year.

Wi-fi could roll out on trains within months

FREE wi-fi could be rolled out across Southeastern trains within months after a deal was struck with a supplier to install the technology.

Passengers have long told rail bosses they want free internet access when using the train service, and now Southeastern have announced that wi-fi specialists, Icomera, will work with the franchise to enable connectivity on all trains by 2018.

And, as the work will be rolled out in stages across Southeastern's entire fleet of 367 trains, some will be fitted with the relevant technology as early as this year.

The move is part of a major investment, which includes millions being invested in station and train refurbishments, 300 more frontline staff and more real time information about services.

Rail minister Paul Maynard said: ''We are investing nearly £50m to roll out free, fast and reliable wi-fi on trains and I am delighted Southeastern passengers are set to be among those to benefit.''

Professor Cox named uni's vice-chancellor

THE University of Kent has confirmed Professor Karen Cox is to become the institution's sixth vice-chancellor and president this summer.

She replaces Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow who announced last year she was to retire from her £265,000-a-year post.

Prof Cox is currently deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Nottingham and will take over the reins in August from Dame Julia who has headed the university during a period of sustained growth and challenges, since 2007.

Sir David Warren, chair of the uni's council, which ratified the appointment, said she had ''an exceptional track record'' and was ''an inspiring leader''.

Prof Cox added: ''I am very much looking forward to getting to know staff and students, whether they are at the Canterbury and Medway campuses, the Tonbridge Centre, or at the academic centres in Brussels, Paris, Rome and Athens, and working with them to ensure that Kent goes from strength to strength.

Birdwatchers unite for RSPB's Big survey

THOUSANDS across the county will be peering into their gardens this weekend as part of the RSPB's annual survey.

The Big Garden Birdwatch encourages everyone to make a note of the birds they spot in their own backyard.

That then feeds into a national picture of species numbers and where abouts they are in the country.

Last year more than 519,000 people spotted 8,262,662 birds, and this year the charity organisation is hoping even more will be seen.

A spokesperson from the RSPB said: ''Each green space can make a difference, from a window box full of pollen rich plants for bumblebees to a small pond hosting a whole range of different species.''

Those taking part need to monitor the birds in their garden or public space during a one-hour window.

Count each species of bird seen and then let the RSPB know. For full details of how to take part, visit the website rspb.org.uk/birdwatch. Results will be released later in the year.

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Rail chaos after freight train derails outside busy station

By Tom Pyman
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RAIL commuters across Kent faced a week of major problems on the network after a freight train derailed just outside Lewisham on Tuesday morning.

It brought disruption to key routes in and out of London while engineers set about removing the stricken train and repairing damaged track.

Trains that usually run from Tunbridge Wells to Cannon Street were terminated at Tonbridge, or diverted to London Victoria while trains starting at Sevenoaks and Orpington to Cannon Street were suspended.

There was no service from Crayford and Sidcup to Charing Cross or Cannon Street, although a limited service ran between Dartford and Sidcup.

Peak evening services from Cannon Street to Medway and on to Broadstairs of Dover were revised to start instead from London Blackfriars.

The freight train derailed at around 5.30am on the approach to Lewisham, in south east London.

The train, whose rear two wagons derailed, was moved from the scene after being returned to the track using cranes, but "extensive damage" to the railway was uncovered.

CARNAGE: The freight train after it derailed, spilling its load over the track

A 50-metre stretch of railway is being "completely rebuilt" by Network Rail.

Andy Derbyshire, chief operating officer for Network Rail's south east route, said: "We know that this incident disrupted many peoples' journeys. We have been doing everything we can to get the site clear and our repairs under way as quickly and safely as possible.

"We need to completely rebuild more than 50 metres of railway from the foundations up, just a few metres from one of the busiest railway lines in the south east.

"This is a significant job but we'll be working round-the-clock until the work is done and trains are back up and running for passengers."

Passengers delayed by at least 30 minutes are urged to claim Delay Repay compensation, which is being doubled by Southeastern. Richard Dean, train services director at Southeastern, said: "We would also ask our passengers to please continue checking before you travelling and to allow more time for your journeys."

Extension to wind farm plans on show

EARLY plans to extend the Thanet Offshore Wind Farm went on show to locals this weekend.

Swedish operator Vattenfall wants to build a further 34 turbines to join the 100 already generating power some 10-15km off Foreness Point.

The sessions, which took place during the week and concluded in Cliffsend on Saturday, are designed to gauge local opinion before the firm puts in any official application.

Football thug gets a three year match ban

A DRUNKEN football fan who left a steward with a bloody nose during a Gillingham match against Rochdale on November has been given a three year football banning order.

Martin Cork, 48, of Davenport Avenue, Gillingham, who pleaded guilty will not be able to attend any games for the length of the order.

Port's £200m loan

A MULTI-million project to revive Dover's Western Docks has received £200m in loans from a number of British and European banks.

The project will create a purpose built cargo and logistics facility at the port.

Allianz Global Investors pumped in £55m RBS and Lloyds each £35m and the European Investment Bank £75m.

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Dozens of schools to be built to fit in 23,000 more pupils

DOZENS of new schools will need to be built in Kent over the next five years to meet a population boom that requires an additional 23,000 primary and secondary places, education chiefs have warned.

While the majority of the places will be absorbed by the expansion of existing schools, KCC admits some 47 new schools are needed across the county by 2022 due to an increase in the number of babies born and more families moving to the county.

The council's cabinet member for education, Roger Gough, said: "Demand for school places has been growing for the last five years.

"More than 10,000 primary places have already been provided by the county council.

"As demand continues to grow

Kent is working hard to make the places available for more than 23,000 primary and secondary extra children who will need school places over the next five years in Kent."

Of these, 15,700 are secondary school places and 8,000 are for primary schools while there will need to be 37 new primary schools and 10 secondaries, Cllr Gough added.

Lille Loophole still letting people arrive unchecked

THE home secretary has been urged to help put an end to a loophole which allows people to arrive in Kent from Europe unchecked on Eurostar services.

The 'Lille Loophole' allows passengers to miss key border checks by buying a ticket from Brussels to Lille but then staying on the train until it reaches Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International.

Passengers can travel freely between Brussels and Lille as both Belgium and France are in the Schengen agreement, allowing them to cross borders without passport checks.

UK border controls have historically only been operated in the country of departure, therefore by staying on the train from Lille, no passport checks are performed on the route into Kent.

Responding to Dover MP Charlie Elphicke, Amber Rudd said: "We will be having conversations both with Border Force and Eurostar to ensure certainty going forward."

Eurostar bosses claim passengers travelling from Brussels to Lille do so in a separate coach controlled by security guards, who then ensure that all of these passengers disembark at Lille before the train goes on to the UK. However, there have since been reports of passengers easily arriving in the UK unchecked.

The Home Office says action has been taken this week to introduce additional checks at Ashford and Ebbsfleet.

Morrisons fuel row over

A DISPUTE which could have seen pumps run dry at petrol stations at Morrisons supermarkets has been resolved.

The row between the firm and DHL delivery drivers serving Kent, London and East Anglia had threatened strike action but on Friday was resolved ''satisfactorily''.

Archdeacon in place

THE Very Revd Jo Kelly-Moore was officially installed as the new Archdeacon of Canterbury and canon residentiary of Canterbury Cathedral last Sunday, in a special service at the cathedral.

Until December, she was Dean of Auckland, in New Zealand.

Dealer's £500k demand

A CONVICTED drug dealer who was part of a criminal gang responsible for supplying large volumes of cocaine throughout Kent has been ordered to pay back almost half a million pounds under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Tony Kolicaj, 36, was jailed for ten years in December 2015.

Young girl chased home

AN 11-year-old girl says she was followed and then chased by a man as she walked past Gillingham railway station at around 3.15pm on Monday.

The girl returned home safely. The man is described as between 5ft 7in and 5ft 9in and wearing a dark jacket with the hood up.

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Rising number of rough sleepers

By Adele Couchman
adele.couchman@archant.co.uk

CRISIS: Canterbury, Maidstone and Thanet are among the worst areas nationwide for rough sleeping numbers

CANTERBURY, Thanet and Maidstone have been named in the top 20 for the highest number of rough sleepers in England, according to recent figures.

Statistics released on Wednesday from the Department for Communities and Local Government show that rough sleeping has increased 16 per on last year, with more than half of councils in England recording a rise in rough sleeping compared to the year before.

Out of 326 local authorities, Canterbury ranks eighth for the highest number of rough sleepers per 1,000 households, with 50 people estimated to be sleeping rough on the streets in 2016 compared to just three in 2010.

The latest figures for 2016 relate to rough sleeping counts and estimates carried out by local authorities between October 1 and November 30.

Thanet has the 18th highest rate of rough sleepers in England, with Maidstone 19th. Figures show that Thanet had just one rough sleeper in 2010 compared to 33 last year. Terry Gore, the manager of Canterbury-based homeless charity Catching Lives, said: "The problem is only going to rise. It's getting harder and harder to get people off the streets because of rising rents and housing allowance not being able to keep up.

"In Canterbury there is not one landlord or letting agent who will take those on housing benefit. They're surviving happily from the student population.

"Every year the council has to cut more from their budgets and central government simply aren't doing enough to tackle housing issues.

"The council does fund our winter shelter, but its only about 10 per cent of our running costs as they haven't been able to afford as much as they could before due to austerity measures."

Canterbury City Council said high levels of seasonal workers coming to the district and supported accommodation attracting people to the area meant the figures were high.

It also said it has secured £600,000 of national government funding to tackle rough sleeping, and has this year doubled the number of emergency night shelter spaces available during periods of cold weather.

Former Thanet Green councillor Ian Driver said he was "appalled and saddened" by the massive rise in the number of rough sleepers in Thanet.

He said: "Thanet council's draft local plan which was open to public consultation last week totally fails to address the need to tackle the desperate shortage of social rented housing in the district, concentrating instead on the home ownership sector instead.

"If Thanet council is serious about tackling the rapidly growing homelessness and rough sleeping crisis then the local plan should be revised to include a significantly larger number of social rented homes being built over the next 15 years".

Thanet council's cabinet member for community services Lin Fairbrass said the council is providing £45,000 towards the Thanet Winter Shelter Scheme and Aspire Homeless Project. The two schemes aim to provide immediate respite during harsh winter months and year-round support.

Stuart Jeffrey of the Maidstone Green Party also criticised Maidstone council for not building enough affordable homes.

"The council's local plan is focused on executive houses built around the periphery, when really our focus should be on affordable housing and bedsits.

"Only 25-30 per cent of housing the council is looking to build is affordable, and 70 to 75 per cent focuses on those big executive homes. That is the complete wrong way round."

Marion Ring, who chairs Maidstone council's communities, housing and environment committee, said more social housing is to be built over the years.

She said: "We work with every charity going that supports homeless people. I would like to have a home for every homeless person, but that can't happen overnight."

The government said it was determined to help the most vulnerable and was investing £550m to tackle the problem.

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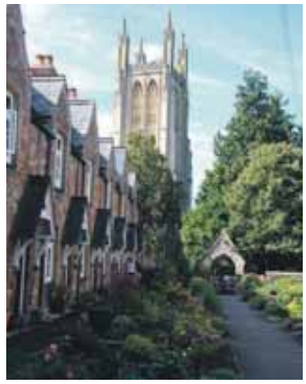

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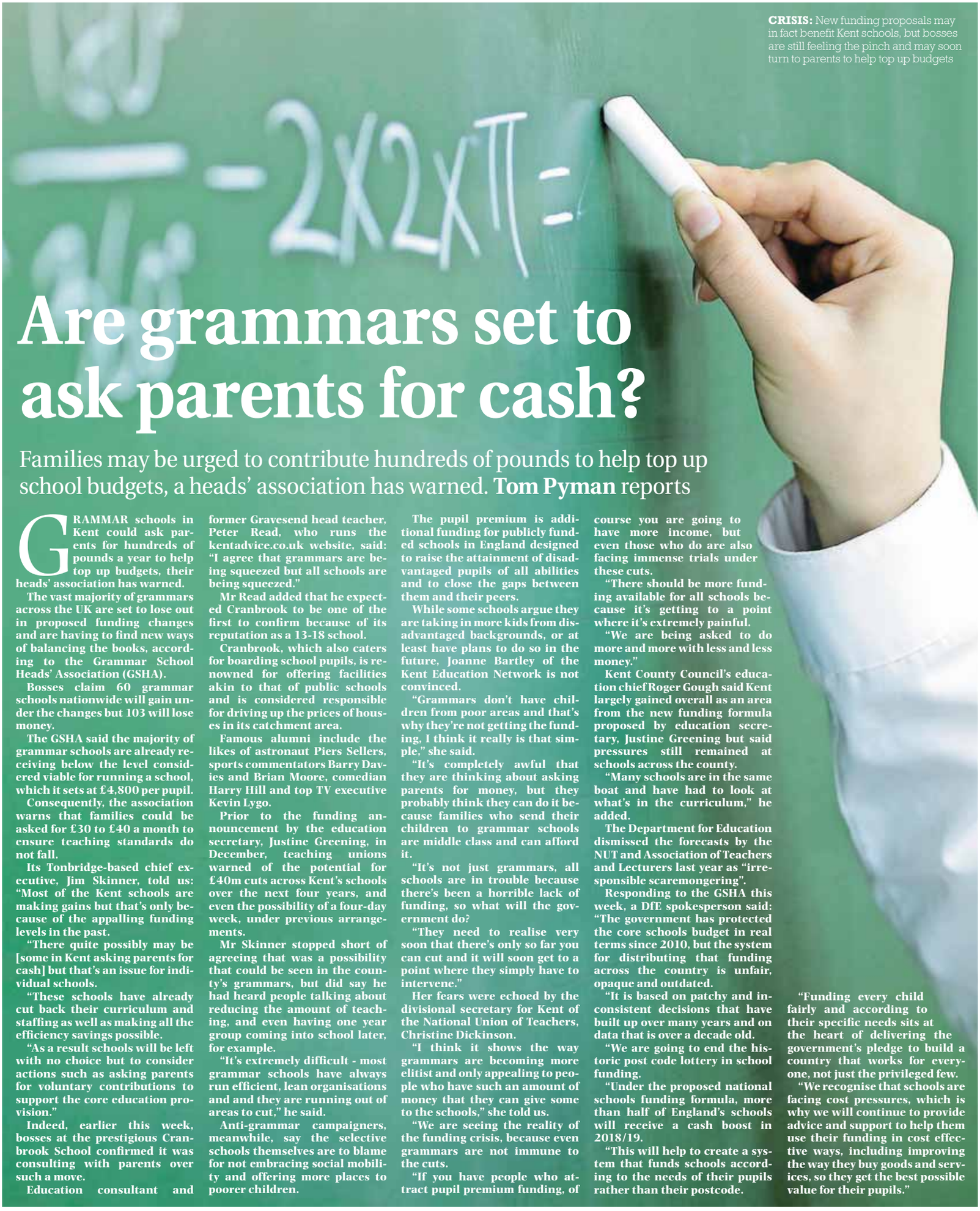

CRISIS: New funding proposals may in fact benefit Kent schools, but bosses are still feeling the pinch and may soon turn to parents to help top up budgets

Are grammars set to ask parents for cash?

Families may be urged to contribute hundreds of pounds to help top up school budgets, a heads' association has warned. **Tom Pyman** reports

GRAMMAR schools in Kent could ask parents for hundreds of pounds a year to help top up budgets, their heads' association has warned.

The vast majority of grammars across the UK are set to lose out in proposed funding changes and are having to find new ways of balancing the books, according to the Grammar School Heads' Association (GSHA).

Bosses claim 60 grammar schools nationwide will gain under the changes but 103 will lose money.

The GSHA said the majority of grammar schools are already receiving below the level considered viable for running a school, which it sets at £4,800 per pupil.

Consequently, the association warns that families could be asked for £30 to £40 a month to ensure teaching standards do not fall.

Its Tonbridge-based chief executive, Jim Skinner, told us: "Most of the Kent schools are making gains but that's only because of the appalling funding levels in the past.

"There quite possibly may be [some in Kent asking parents for cash] but that's an issue for individual schools.

"These schools have already cut back their curriculum and staffing as well as making all the efficiency savings possible.

"As a result schools will be left with no choice but to consider actions such as asking parents for voluntary contributions to support the core education provision."

Indeed, earlier this week, bosses at the prestigious Cranbrook School confirmed it was consulting with parents over such a move.

Education consultant and former Gravesend head teacher, Peter Read, who runs the kentadvice.co.uk website, said: "I agree that grammars are being squeezed but all schools are being squeezed."

Mr Read added that he expected Cranbrook to be one of the first to confirm because of its reputation as a 13-18 school.

Cranbrook, which also caters for boarding school pupils, is renowned for offering facilities akin to that of public schools and is considered responsible for driving up the prices of houses in its catchment area.

Famous alumni include the likes of astronaut Piers Sellers, sports commentators Barry Davies and Brian Moore, comedian Harry Hill and top TV executive Kevin Lygo.

Prior to the funding announcement by the education secretary, Justine Greening, in December, teaching unions warned of the potential for £40m cuts across Kent's schools over the next four years, and even the possibility of a four-day week, under previous arrangements.

Mr Skinner stopped short of agreeing that was a possibility that could be seen in the county's grammars, but did say he had heard people talking about reducing the amount of teaching, and even having one year group coming into school later, for example.

"It's extremely difficult - most grammar schools have always run efficient, lean organisations and and they are running out of areas to cut," he said.

Anti-grammar campaigners, meanwhile, say the selective schools themselves are to blame for not embracing social mobility and offering more places to poorer children.

The pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England designed to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and to close the gaps between them and their peers.

While some schools argue they are taking in more kids from disadvantaged backgrounds, or at least have plans to do so in the future, Joanne Bartley of the Kent Education Network is not convinced.

"Grammars don't have children from poor areas and that's why they're not getting the funding, I think it really is that simple," she said.

"It's completely awful that they are thinking about asking parents for money, but they probably think they can do it because families who send their children to grammar schools are middle class and can afford it.

"It's not just grammars, all schools are in trouble because there's been a horrible lack of funding, so what will the government do?

"They need to realise very soon that there's only so far you can cut and it will soon get to a point where they simply have to intervene."

Her fears were echoed by the divisional secretary for Kent of the National Union of Teachers, Christine Dickinson.

"I think it shows the way grammars are becoming more elitist and only appealing to people who have such an amount of money that they can give some to the schools," she told us.

"We are seeing the reality of the funding crisis, because even grammars are not immune to the cuts.

"If you have people who attract pupil premium funding, of course you are going to have more income, but even those who do are also facing immense trials under these cuts.

"There should be more funding available for all schools because it's getting to a point where it's extremely painful.

"We are being asked to do more and more with less and less money."

Kent County Council's education chief Roger Gough said Kent largely gained overall as an area from the new funding formula proposed by education secretary, Justine Greening but said pressures still remained at schools across the county.

"Many schools are in the same boat and have had to look at what's in the curriculum," he added.

The Department for Education dismissed the forecasts by the NUT and Association of Teachers and Lecturers last year as "irresponsible scaremongering".

Responding to the GSHA this week, a DfE spokesperson said: "The government has protected the core schools budget in real terms since 2010, but the system for distributing that funding across the country is unfair, opaque and outdated.

"It is based on patchy and inconsistent decisions that have built up over many years and on data that is over a decade old.

"We are going to end the historic post code lottery in school funding.

"Under the proposed national schools funding formula, more than half of England's schools will receive a cash boost in 2018/19.

"This will help to create a system that funds schools according to the needs of their pupils rather than their postcode.

"Funding every child fairly and according to their specific needs sits at the heart of delivering the government's pledge to build a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

"We recognise that schools are facing cost pressures, which is why we will continue to provide advice and support to help them use their funding in cost effective ways, including improving the way they buy goods and services, so they get the best possible value for their pupils."

County MPs pile further pressure on bank giants

Kent came out unscathed as HSBC this week shut 62 branches, but our elected representatives fear a trend is growing

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

PRESSURE is growing on big banks from Kent MPs following a series of closures of high street branches across the county.

HSBC announced earlier this week it was to shut 62 branches nationwide, citing a shift in customer banking habits towards online services.

While Kent and Medway avoided the axe on this occasion, it followed hot on the heels of nine closures of NatWest branches across the county announced just before Christmas.

Banks in Bearsted, Borough Green, Broadstairs, Hythe, Rochester, Sandwich, Staplehurst, the University of Kent in Canterbury and Whitstable are all scheduled to close by the end of June.

As a result, MPs say they are piling pressure on the companies, urging them not to enforce the closures, with South Thanet's Craig Mackinlay set to deliver a petition to the chief executive of NatWest in the coming days outlining local opposition.

"I am grateful that there were no more closures in my constituency or other parts of Kent, but it's an ongoing battle," he told KoS.

"There needs to be a wider debate about how banks can think outside the box a bit more and I'd like to see them working closer together in a shared facility, for example - I don't see why you can't have multiple banks within one branch.

"I fully understand the rise of internet banking but there is always going to be a core of elderly electorate, all who do not grasp it, and why should they? I don't want my 82-year-old dad falling prey to scams.

"I am demanding that they think differently and come up with a better solution."

Just outside Mr Mackinlay's constituency is the village of Birchington, where HSBC, NatWest, Lloyds and Barclays branches have all been lost in recent years.

Neville Hudson, chair of the local parish council, said it was putting intense strain on both businesses and the village's 11,000 residents.

THREAT: Rochester's NatWest branch is due to shut later this year

CHANGE: HSBC announced it was closing dozens of branches this week in a greater shift towards online banking

"We have a large percentage of elderly people in Birchington and this impacts hugely on them because of the lack of ability to go into a local branch," he told KoS.

"The nearest are now in Margate or Westwood which of course means travel which is not always easy.

"There's just one bank and then NatWest who provide a mobile service in the church car park for 45 minutes on Fridays.

"The problem in our communities is people are not computer-intelligent and many of them are scared to embrace it.

"You can do a lot online but you can't get change or cash a cheque can you?

"And it's a double-whammy because local traders rely on footfall, which there will be less of if people are having to go elsewhere to do their banking.

"I think the businesses are holding their own at the moment but it's very uncomfortable."

After announcing the closures last year, NatWest bosses moved to reassure affected residents by revealing plans to create a "community banker" role to providing customers with personal assistance as well as "digital experts" to help get them online.

It also struck an agreement with the Post Office so customers can pay money in, take money out, check balances and business customers can get coinage.

Cllr Hudson, however, is not convinced it is a reasonable solution for people in his village.

"The banks have done deals with the Post Office but it's not adequate or comfortable for the customer," he said.

"It's one thing waiting in a banking hall, but in Birchington, the Post Office is right at the back of the supermarket – it gets extremely busy and it's ultimately inaccessible."

The Federation of Small Businesses recently published a report outlining the impact of widespread closures on local companies throughout Kent and beyond.

"Small businesses identify a lack of digital skills as a key obstacle to their doing more online," bosses said.

"This was a more significant issue for older small business owners.

"Partly as a result, businesses in rural areas are disproportionately vulnerable to both financial and digital exclusion – particularly where branch closures have recently taken place."

The FSB's development manager for Kent, Alison Parmar, was unavailable for further comment.

The rural constituency of Faversham and Mid Kent MP Helen Whately will certainly be affected by the planned closures, which has sparked her to also write to bank bosses and try and halt a widespread trend.

Once the NatWest branch in Bearsted shuts up shop for good on June 5, there won't be a single bank anywhere in the village, which the Conservative says is concerning.

"Rural banks closing down is a growing trend and a few have closed in my constituency recently," she said.

"I understand that fewer people now use bank branches because they bank online, but that doesn't work for everybody.

"Small businesses deal in cash and cheques and could be hit by the loss of branches.

"I'm worried particularly about older people; though many are tech savvy, not all are, so internet banking is not an option.

"Many vulnerable people rely on face-to-face interaction with their bank, and it's not good enough just to tell them to move online."

Rochester and Strood MP Kelly Tolhurst has been another passionate campaigner in the battle against bank closures and believes the community should have been consulted prior to the announcement.

She claimed the move was "short-sighted" given Medway Council is currently consulting on its local plan, which outlines an intention to develop a further 30,000 homes by 2035.

Upon announcing the closures this week, HSBC bosses said that over the five years, the number of customers using its branches has fallen by almost 40 per cent, and some 93 per cent of customer contact with the bank is done online or on the phone, while 97 per cent of cash withdrawals are made via an ATM.

"The decision to close these branches ensures a more sustainable branch network for the future as we continue to invest in our digital platforms and our people," said head of retail banking and wealth management for UK and Europe, Francesca McDonagh.

"We will have fewer but better branches, with more empowered front line colleagues using a greater range of technology to support all our customers' needs.

"Our priority now is to work with our colleagues, our customers and the communities impacted by this announcement.

"We are contacting customers to explain the decision and help them with alternative ways to bank with us.

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KL 1/16

It's becoming a reality as four councils get set to merge in 2019

Special report: It would be the biggest shake-up in local government in the county for years, and in just two years a 'super' east Kent council could be in place. But what does it mean to you and what impact will it have on life in the future?

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

PLANS to create a merged east Kent council as part of the biggest local government shake-up in decades will not affect staffing levels on the frontline, bosses have insisted.

With the local authorities of Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet all set to face serious financial difficulties by 2019/20, council chiefs have looked to move quickly as they unveiled the business case for the plans this week, aiming to create a new 'super council' within the next two years.

In Kent's current two-tier system, KCC looks after services including schools, social care, public health, community safety and transport, while the districts are responsible for services such as planning applications, rubbish collection and housing.

Plans to create a unitary body like Medway - which is responsible for all services - are not completely off the table, bosses said, but for the time being, the four aim to move ahead as a merged district council.

Ashford Borough Council was also involved in the discussion but has since dropped out of the process, though leader Gerry Clarkson insists he will remain a consulting partner alongside the four planning to merge.

Savings of some £6.8m are anticipated to be achieved within two years of launch, though it is emphasised this will largely be done through slashing senior management roles on high salaries, rather than those delivering services on the frontline.

The working suggestion is trimming eight per cent of the 1,850 posts across the four authorities, equating to around 150 jobs.

"This is the first reorganisation I've seen where the victims are the chiefs and the Indians keep going," said Thanet council leader, Chris Wells.

"The people who actually deliver the services on the ground will in the main be required to stay there and keep doing it.

"I said to my chief executive when she was talking to staff earlier that she should have had a picture of all the senior staff in a guillotine because, unusually, they're working on a business case that is drafting their own suicide note."

As well as executive roles, the number of councillors will also naturally be reduced under the proposals.

There are currently 170 posts across Canterbury, Dover, Thanet and Shepway and bosses anticipate this will be reduced to somewhere between 72 and 100 elected council roles, though an official number will be drawn up following consultation with the Boundary Commission.

Currently, there is no working title for the name of the district, nor a concrete proposal for where the council's headquarters will be based.

In terms of council tax, the business case proposes a number of possibilities, but chiefs say there is no hiding behind the fact there will be "winners and losers".

One proposal suggests a huge 19.9 per cent increase in council tax for Dover residents to bring the amount for a band D property level with other areas.

In turn, that would mean a seven per cent rise for people in Canterbury and reductions for those in Shepway and Thanet.

Other scenarios propose more modest increases.

As well as the significant amount of cash savings - the merger aims to save some £60m between now and 2025 - leaders say creating one large district will give east Kent a stronger voice and greater influence at national level.

It could be the type of move that would stop a repeat of a controversial case last year, where Canterbury council was outbid in its efforts to secure housing at the former Howe Barracks in the city.

The 200 homes were instead awarded to the London borough of Redbridge - some 60 miles away - simply because of its greater resources.

Shepway council leader, David Monk, told us: "To become a large, unified council gives us strength and clout.

"If you look at our population, we'll end up with around 560,000 people – that's a substantial part of Kent, about a third.

"It will be used for gaining infrastructure, we get to push harder."

Cllr Clarkson suggested his council did not share financial woes on the same scale as the other four, and was a major reason behind the decision to drop out.

"We engaged consultants that examined the business case and unfortunately it does not work for Ashford," he said.

"We are in a different position and to be part of that particular grouping would not be advantageous for them or us, and when you get

UNITED: Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Shepway would be included - but Ashford has decided to pull out of the proposal

the results from consultants, you can't just dismiss them because they're not the answers you want, you engage them to give you the advice.

"Ashford has been a growth area for two decades and we have a different dynamic in terms of financial base for us.

"It doesn't dovetail with the five and therefore makes more sense to work with them and have two strong councils: Ashford and the new authority, working very closely."

Meetings will now be held to formally consider the four-way business case before a decision is taken by each council on March 22 as to whether to move to the next stage of public engagement.

That period of consultation will run until mid-June, before responses are evaluated and a decision is made.

If the councils opt to go ahead, the case is then taken to the local government and communities secretary, Sajid Javid, who would have to give formal approval by the end of 2017 in order to launch the creation in time for elections in May 2019.

If given the green light, the plans will then have to go through parliament in order to "legally abolish" the existing authorities and create the new council.

Suggestions that a local identity will be lost in the merger were dismissed by council bosses,

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 15

who insisted there would be more representation and empowerment for the third tier of local government.

"The districts we have are quite artificial constructs," said Canterbury leader, Simon Cook.

"I have never ever met someone who says 'I live in Shepway', they say they live in Folkestone or Hythe.

"They're simply lines drawn on the map in 1974, so naturally people don't identify with them, but they do identify with the villages.

"We're not afraid of devolution, the more we can empower town and parish councils the better because quite often they know better what's needed.

"You could have greater economies of scale if you had some kind of national bin collection, but you don't do that because someone sat in London isn't best suited for your needs.

"We want to capture that local community knowledge."

Cllr Wells added: "To a great extent, in order to make this work, local identities are focused around parish councils.

"If you've got a parish council that looks after your toilets and your parks and your day-to-day planning issues, you've got a real sense of local democracy in your local town and ultimately it just makes more sense."

The Thanet leader suggested they could even be given powers over certain planning decisions, such as the construction of a small number of houses.

Cllr Monk agreed: "Folkestone won't go away, Margate won't go away, Whitstable won't go away.

"What will happen is those town and parish councils will almost certainly want to take on some minor planning and we'll be happy to give it to them.

"The support that we can give to them from a larger entity is greater than a single one."

Ray Evison, who recently stepped down as chairman of Kent Association of Local Councils, said towns and parishes would need to assess the proposals in detail.

LEADERS: Chris Wells, Simon Cook, Paul Watkins, Gerry Clarkson and David Monk

"We are waiting until they come clean on this," he told us.

"We will be bargaining for a range of opportunities, responsibilities and roles, particularly a greater say on planning.

"We will get a holistic view when we meet and discuss this in three weeks' time, rather than catching crumbs like we are at the moment."

The leaders refused to comment on what would happen if residents overwhelmingly rejected such a plan, reiterating their stance that it was the best possible way of ensuring essential services remain against a backdrop of cuts.

Dover District Council leader, Paul Watkins, said: "We would like to consider what the public think the alternatives are to deal with local authority's financial issues.

"We want to see comprehensive answers, not just criticism.

"If this isn't the solution, what is the answer so we can deliver savings and ensure east Kent has a strong local government operation?"

Cllr Wells added: "The fat that could have been taken out has been, but when you project forward, we're all going to have trouble providing the basic services residents expect from us, and something has to be done.

"If we proactively did something about it to produce a council with better resilience, greater resources, it's better than waiting for the world to collapse around us and force us into that decision."

Cllr Cook added: "Local government reorganisation is not going to be talked about in the pub on a Saturday night, but we want everyone to take an interest.

"This is a transparent engagement process and ultimately, it's not about us, it's about residents.

"I know local councillors have this perception of being in it for ourselves, but you talk to them and they do it to help their community, and what better way can they do that by ensuring services are protected?

"If you're not doing that, what are you doing in local government?"

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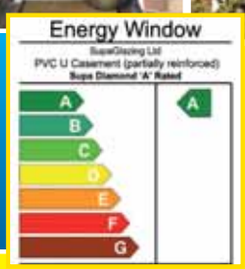

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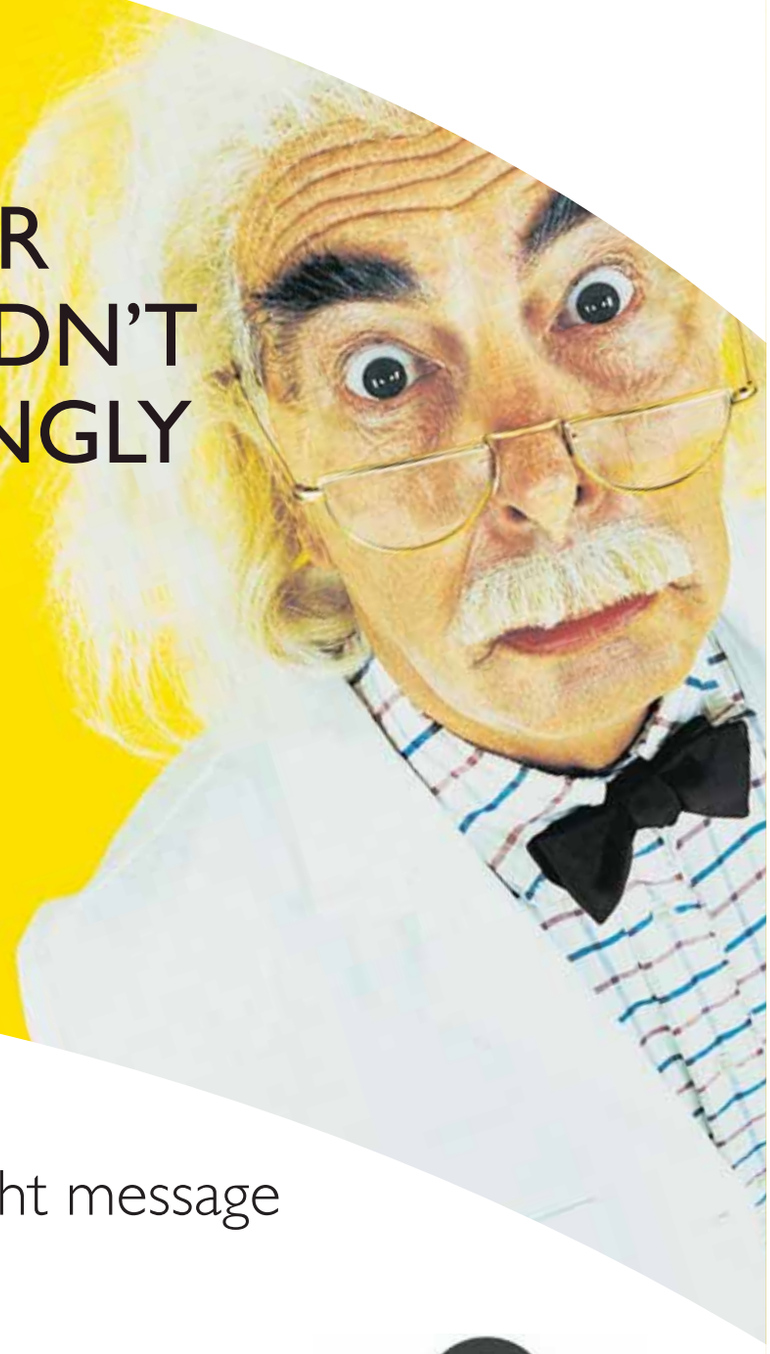

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FRIENDS: South east MEP Janice Atkinson wants to introduce Marine Le Pen to Theresa May

Victory for Le Pen would make county 'safer place'

MEP Janice Atkinson insists Kent will benefit if the far right National Front party sweeps to power in France's upcoming presidential election this year

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

KENT will be "a safer place" if the far-right candidate for the French presidency, Marine Le Pen, sweeps to power, a county MEP has said.

Leader of the 'Front National' party, Mme Le Pen is now leading the polls in the race to win the keys to the Élysée Palace when French voters take to the polls in the spring.

Independent MEP for the south east Janice Atkinson, who stood as a Ukip candidate in Folkestone and Hythe for the 2015 general election, before being expelled from the party, has become the latest voice to warn that the UK government is not taking Mme Le Pen's growing momentum seriously enough.

Much like Nigel Farage's bid to take advantage of his friendship with president Donald Trump and act as an ambassador for the UK in the US, Ms Atkinson has offered to "facilitate an introduction" between Theresa May and Mme Le Pen.

She told KoS: "If my friend Marine Le Pen wins the French elections this spring then we will see the end of free movement of migrants through France, none of whom are stopped but just waived through in the hope that they get to the UK.

"We will certainly not see any more camps at Calais or Dieppe, run by criminal gangs.

"Those trying to break into Kent either to stay or pass through to other areas in the UK will be stopped by French authorities.

"They will then be deported back to their countries of origins or at least to the first country they arrived in at the EU's borders. Kent will be a safer place.

"There is another advantage of me being a Kent MEP. As David Cameron's patsy appointment of his former failed Brexit advisor, Ed Llewellyn, as ambassador to France, has refused to open relations with Marine, I am happy to facilitate an introduction to my Conservative friends and prime minister.

"Another first for Kent, just like Nigel Farage and Trump."

Mr Farage, who lives in Westerham, said last week ministers are making mistakes by not engaging with Mme Le Pen having not done so with Mr Trump prior to his surprise election win last year.

"It is therefore extraordinary that the British Embassy in Paris is not reaching out to all of the main contenders to be France's next president, who will be elected in May," he said.

"Yet, Marine Le Pen has been excluded from this.

"I'm not saying that she will win, but there is every chance she could, and I'm pretty certain that she will at least make it to the final round.

"It seems our government are not learning from their mistakes."

Mr Farage in November said victory for Mme Le Pen would be a "questionable thing" because he had "great difficulty" with the Front National party, although he said he "never said a bad word" about its leader.

Conversely, Mme Le Pen last year said there was "not a hair's breadth" separating Ukip and Front National, and said it was "ridiculous" for Mr Farage and his colleagues to pretend their party was any different from hers.

Chris Wells, leader of Thanet District Council, the only Ukip majority council in the country, agreed with his former party leader, who stood for the parliament seat in South Thanet in 2015, that the government was underestimating the rise of Le Pen.

Responding to Ms Atkinson's comments, he told KoS: "This is a classic moment of self promotion in the week Theresa May departs for Washington, in part to mend fences with changed reality.

"I wholeheartedly agree that the Tory government was slow to recognise how to deal with a Trump victory, slower even than it was to deal with a Brexit victory.

"Whatever the Tories decide to do about a potential Le Pen victory, this administration seems to be unwilling to face reality as historic events overturn its belief in political elites and their perceived divine right to power.

"In Britain, in America, and soon in France it is the frustration of working people with false promise that is the winner right now - something Tories lamentably fail to understand.

"Ukip is their voice and their hope."

Conservative MP for Dover, Charlie Elphicke, insists he has a strong relationship with France and told us last year he is in contact with officials across the Channel on a weekly basis.

Mr Elphicke was contacted for comment multiple times this week but was unavailable.

The Foreign Office was also contacted for a response to Ms Atkinson's comments but did not respond at the time of going to press.

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

WHILE in the UK elections are traditionally held on a Thursday, across the Channel, voters take to the polls on a Sunday.

When choosing their next president, the French electorate do so in what is known as a 'run-off' voting system, not dissimilar to what is used in the UK's police and crime commissioner votes.

It is used to elect a single winner where a single vote is cast, and this first round of voting takes place on April 23.

However, if no candidate receives the required number of votes, a second round of voting will be held between the top two candidates on May 7.

The system ensures that the elected president always obtains a majority, arguably unlike in the US where Hillary Clinton actually won more individual votes than Donald Trump.

Marine Le Pen famously booted her own father, Jean-Marie, out of the party after he said the Holocaust was nothing more than ''a detail of history''.

While her stock appears to be rising, both in France and seemingly among some politicians in the UK, she is not currently the bookies' favourite to win the keys to the Élysée Palace.

To become president, she will likely need to win more votes than current favourite, and self-confessed Thatcherite, Francois Fillon and Emmanuel Macron - current president Francois Hollande's former economy minister who set up his own centrist party in a grab for power.

Campaigning for the candidates ends at midnight the Friday before the election, and then on the day of the vote, by law, no polls can be published and no electoral publication and broadcasts can be made.

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Appeal not to ignore key cancer screening

Statistics have revealed a worrying number of women are failing to attend vital checks which could save their lives

By Emily King
Emily.King@archant.co.uk

EMBARRASSMENT and a lack of understanding are the prime reasons why women are increasingly skipping potentially life-saving cervical cancer screenings, say experts.

Statistics recently released by NHS England South East show the number of women between the age of 25 and 29 in Kent attending their smear tests is the lowest in any age group and that numbers are falling year on year.

It's believed that around a quarter of women, of all age groups, across the county are missing their screening opportunities.

The number of women dying from cervical cancer has halved over the past 28 years as a result of the screening programme as well as improvement in treatment, but despite this success over 3,000 women are diagnosed each year.

It received a major publicity push following the death of reality TV star Jade Goody in 2009. She was just 27 and her battle with the illness saw a spike in the number of young people taking up smear tests.

But that now appears to be declining again.

The worrying statistics were released at the beginning of Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, a national campaign aimed at heightening awareness of the importance of the tests and helping women recognise early-stage symptoms.

If caught early, the illness can be treated effectively and in many cases eradicated.

Chief executive of Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, the only national charity dedicated to the illness, Robert Music, told KoS: "CCP Week is really important and it's aimed at all women, not just young women or women that haven't yet gone through the menopause. We want to send out a clear message that the impact of not attending your smear test when invited for one could be life or death.

"There is a definite risk, that if you hold off on going to your smear test, you could be causing yourself more harm. If you don't go, you could be prolonging a diagnosis and also treatment."

Nigel Acheson, NHS England south region medical director and lead for cancer, said: "We have noticed a fall in attendance of younger women over the past few years, and this decline in attendance for screening is now linked in a rise in the incidence of cervical cancer in women under 35."

A smear test takes approximately five minutes, and all women are advised to have one every three years.

Mr Acheson, who is also a consultant gynaecologist oncologist, said: "It is really important for young women to understand the importance of attending cervical screening as it can detect pre-cancer abnormalities, which, if left untreated, may develop into cancer. Screening is for people without symptoms as a preventative measure.

"The screening test is relatively simple, takes about five minutes and is performed by the practice nurse a your GP surgery. Around 95 per cent of results will be normal and of those that are not, the vast majority can be treated very easily and will never develop into cancer."

Mr Music added: "Women who skip their smear test often say it's because they're embarrassed or they think it'll be painful, or even that they're worried about the results they may get. But they need to remember that this is a test to prevent cancer, not to diagnose it, and the test saves around 5,000 lives a year.

"Most women say the test is uncomforable, and maybe a bit painful but it takes a couple of minutes, and it could save your life."

The cervical cancer screening programme isn't currently open to women under 25 under the recommendation of medical experts.

"Women under 25 are at a greater risk of getting the human papilloma virus (HPV), with 80 per cent of them getting it at some point in their lives. Though women now approaching 25 will have had the HPV vaccine given to girls around the age of 12 or 13," comments Mr Music. "There's a risk for that younger age group that their screening could come back with abnormalities caused by HPV, which if left alone would be treated within 18 months to two years by their immune system. They could be treated for abnormalities, which aren't cancerous, without needing to be, and this could cause more damage for the future."

The most common symptom of cervical cancer is irregular bleeding, and this is something Mr Music says charities need to raise more awareness of.

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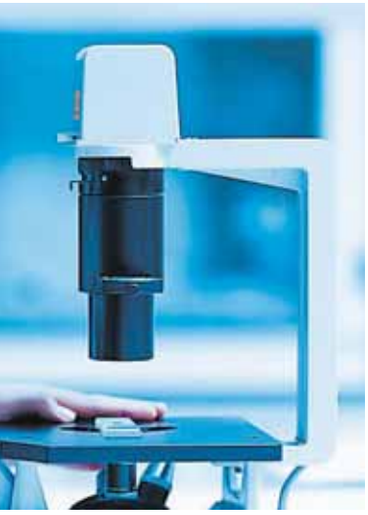

CHECK: If detected early, cervical cancer can be effectively treated. And the test lasts mere minutes

He said: "We need to teach women about the symptoms of cervical cancer, what to look for, and how to know when there's cause for concern.

"GPs also need to be educated. NHS protocol is that if someone goes to their GP with symptoms, then they should be referred to a gynocologist. They should never be brushed aside, and women shouldn't feel ashamed to keep visiting their doctor if they think something is wrong."

Only five per cent of results from smear tests show any abnormalities, and support is available for women who find out something may be wrong.

VICTIM: Jade Goody's death in 2009 saw a sharp spike in smear tests

Mr Music said: "If women need support charities including Jo's Trust are there for that purpose. Essentially they need to see their GP to begin treatment as soon as possible, because what's discovered may still be pre-cancerous and with some minor treatment will disappear. But women also need to know what questions to ask - if your results come back abnormal, do your research, go on our website and read up on cervical cancer."

■ **For more information on Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, or for support, visit jostrust,org.uk**

CERVICAL CANCER SYMPTOMS

WOMEN who are diagnosed with cervical cancer often experience typical symptoms prior to diagnosis.

The most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding in between periods, and/or during or after sex.

Other symptoms include: Unusual vaginal discharge; discomfort or pain during sex; and lower back pain.

Abnormal vaginal bleeding is quite common and is usually not serious. If a woman is experiencing symptoms such as abnormal bleeding she will need to be examined by her practice nurse or GP and should undergo a direct vaginal examination, including the cervix, in order to rule out the very small chance that a cancer is present.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A SMEAR TEST?

CERVICAL screening should take no more than 20 minutes with the actual proceedure taking approximately three minutes.

- You will be asked to undress from the waist down, to lie on an examination bed on your back either with your legs bent up or with your ankles together and your knees apart.
- Your practice nurse will then insert an instrument called a speculum into your vagina. Some clinicians may use lubricant on the speculum, which will make it easier to insert. The speculum will be gently opened inside, allowing the nurse to see your cervix.
- A specially designed brush is used to take a sample of cells from your cervix.
- The nurse will collect the sample from the area of the cervix called the transformation zone. The sampled cells are immersed in a vial of liquid to help preserve them and are then looked at under a microscope in a laboratory to check for abnormalities.

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Plans progress for series of First World War history trails

A series of special walks through Kent's countryside continues to be developed

By Emily King
Emily.King@archant.co.uk

DISCUSSIONS are currently taking place with Lydd Town Council chiefs and community groups about establishing a commemorative First World War hertiage trial which will run through the town, stopping off at key wartime landmarks.

Lydd's trail is one of 30 to be created throughout the county to coincide with the war's 100th anniversary.

The Heritage Lottery Fund which gave media company Screen South £99,000 to create the trails, named 100 Miles for 100 Years, hope they will all be completed within 18 months. The trails will be three-miles long, free to use, and situated in an array of Kentish towns which played a significant role during the war.

So far Dymchurch, Folkestone, and Sittingbourne trails are up and running, and other places joining them include Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Deal, Dover, Gravesend, Herne Bay, Isle of Sheppey, Lydd, Maidstone, Margate, Ramsgate, Sevenoaks, Southborough and High Brooms, Rochester, Gillingham, Chatham, Faversham, Whitstable, Broadstairs, Sandwich, St Margaret's, Hythe, Romney, and Tenterden and Tonbridge.

The themed trails aim to reveal the stories of local people, buildings and events that took place during the First World War through recollections compiled by local communities.

On Wednesday the head of First World War heritage at Screen South, Darrienne Price, met with the Friends of Lydd historic society and the custodians of Lydd Town Museum in the town council chambers to discuss the trail's prospect in the town.

Addressing the group, Ms Price said: "Our aim is to show the local people and tourists how significant the town was in the First World War, and to show the rich heritage that encompasses Lydd.

"But in order to do this, we need to work with you and the community because only the local people will know where is worth visiting, or what stories are exciting. You'll also be able to tell us what the environment is like, whether one road isn't walkable or when's best to visit the memorial inside the church."

During and even before the First World War, Lydd was known as a military town as it housed an army training camp. The Royal Garrison Artillery was a military barracks, and the School of Siege Artillery served as an important training facility.

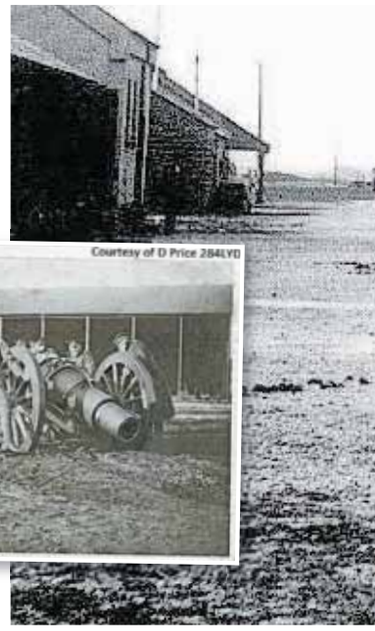
Alongside the camp were the Lydd Ranges, sistering the Hythe Ranges as part of the Cinque Ports Firing Ranges, and they also contained a military hospital. The Lydd Ranges were used for trials of techniques and munitions, with the explosive Lyddite taking its name from the place where it was developed.

During the war, the army camp was extended with metal huts which became known to the local people as Tin City. There was also a five-mile long railway track which ran through the camp leading to Ashford, run by South Eastern Railway.

And in 1916 the Number Two Royal Flying Corps Balloon School was established. Balloons were used in the war as an aerial platform for intellegience gathering and artillery shooting.

The army camp, railway station, ranges, balloon school and hospital are all piviotol places in Lydd which will undoubtedly be encorporated within the trail, but Ms Price says places like the local church, and the post office were also of the upmost importance to wartime Lydd and should be used in the trail too.

She explained: "Post offices were really important during the war as it's where people got their news from. Telegrams from the battlefield were stuck up on post office windows, and



PAST: Lydd's historic role during the war revealed in old postcards

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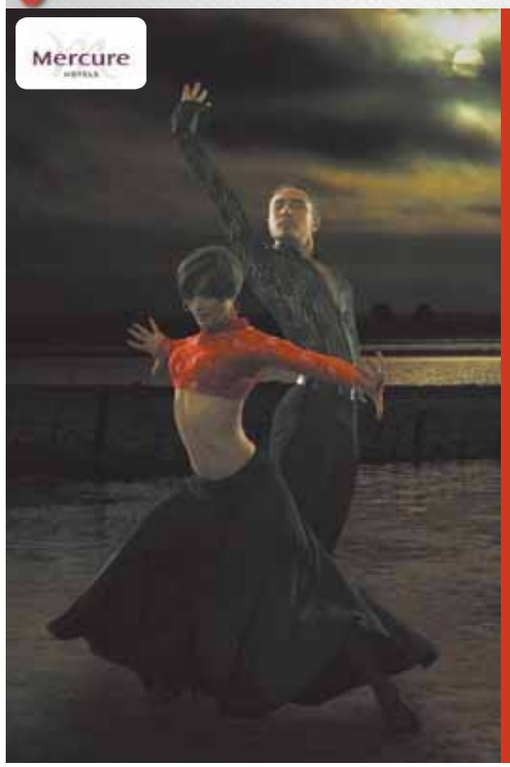

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there would be around eight lots of letters a day.

"Actually people were outraged when the post office decided that there should only be post five times a day, which in modern times seems ridiculous. It could be said they had a far better postal system.

"The church is incredibly important here because that's where the original war memorial is. There's one outside but that wasn't created until the 1970s, whereas this one even bares two battlefield crosses from family members in Lydd who were wealthy enough to buy them for their loved ones who died during the war."

Before the trail in Lydd can be created, Ms Price will hold a drop-in for the public whereby they can bring in stories of their ancestors, pictures, relevant family heirlooms such as postcards or war medals, or even ideas they think will benefit the trail.

"It's really up to the people of Lydd as to how they want the trail to turn out and to look," commented Ms Price. "Every town or location is unique in what it can offer, and essentially we hope walking one trail will encourage people to walk another, different one."

After the drop-in session there will be free training workshops for the local people so that they can become tourist guides, then follows trail development and the creation of a quiz for people to complete as they walk.

During Wednesday's meeting, it was agreed that the launch would take place as an addition to Club Day, an annual carnival which always takes place on the third Saturday of June.

■ **For more information about the drop-in session, or other trails visit, kentww1.com, or email info@kentww1.com.**

PAST: Lydd was a strategic military location and has a rich history to offer walkers once the details of the proposed trail are agreed on

FUTURE: It is hoped the walks will enlighten another generation

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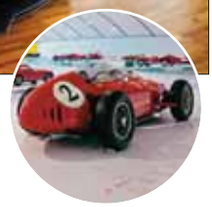

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23 December, 2017 - Quote RH12-KOS

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GOLDEN VOICE: The legendary Matt Monro, above, will be celebrated by his son on tour

Matt Monro Jr brings dad's legacy back to life on stage

The singer performs his father's songs alongside video clips and tales on tour

MATT MONRO was dubbed 'the singer's singer' and 'the man with the golden voice', and sold a staggering 100 million records in his time including the soundtrack to Bond movie From Russia with Love.

Now his son, Matt Monro Jr, is paying tribute to his legendary father with a new CD, A Father's Legacy, and tour, The Matt Monro Story, which is coming to Bromley, Maidstone, and Folkestone.

Speaking to Mr Monro Jr about the show, he says: "My dad was in showbusiness for 31 years, but even his biggest fans didn't know him. So with this show I'm going to put his life story on stage. It literally covers his life from birth to death, nothing is missed out."

The show will feature videos from key points of the singer's life including other famous stars, home videos, and concert clips.

"I do all the singing," says Mr Monro Jr. "But they're all dad's songs. The audience will find out what the man was like, it's full of an array of emotions. It'll make you happy, sad, you'll laugh and cry. It's my way of showing everyone that I'm proud he's my dad."

Growing up, Mr Monro Jr didn't even realise his dad was famous, and states that he had a very normal childhood.

"I didn't know he was famous until I was 13. He was an amazing dad, but I didn't realise until it dawned on me that everyone knew my dad but I didn't know everyone else's dad.

"He still did very normal dad things, he taught me to treat people how you want to be treated, and my values and things.

"The only thing that was every a big deal was that we would go on very exotic holidays, the kind that people never went on in those days. But this was because we'd go somewhere where people wouldn't know him, so that we could get some peace and quiet."

There is one aspect of the show which stands above all else for Mr Monro Jr, and that is when he duets with his dad.

"The only time I got to do this when he was alive was in 1977, and I remember thinking that we should do it again, but a few years later he was dead. It's my way of saying goodbye to him.

"I don't cry often at all, but it's the part of the show that makes me cry everytime. I'm definitely anticipating some more tears throughout the dates coming up."

As The Matt Monro Story means so much to Mr Monro Jr, he has great hopes for how it'll make audiences feel.

"It's a breathtaking, emotional, and heartwarming show. We did a trial run last year and people were coming up to us afterwards saying it brought back their own memories, and heightened their emotions. Most admitted they'd cried as well.

"Essentially, I just want everyone to know my dad. I want to take them on a n emotional journey and make them leave saying 'wow!'".

The story is coming to Bromley's Churchill Theatre on February 24, Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on March 9, and Folkestone's Leas Cliff Hall on April 29.

For tickets visit churchilltheatre.co.uk,parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/Hazlitt-Theatre, or ticketmaster.co.uk.

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Women Seeking

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LIVELY 53 year old female, young in mind, wants discreet fun, loves gardening, dancing music etc and more. **Text only. Mailbox: 5763284**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673**

JACKIE, 56yrs, attractive lady who is lots of fun seeks like minded gent for nights in, days out and much much more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424491**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715**

SUE, 60s lady, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady, I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424781**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399**

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTM interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424675**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375**

SUE, genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424673**

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! **Tel: 0906 515 3026 Box 423035**

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425341**

NAUGHTY curvy 46yr old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a naughty side and lots of banter, WLTM chap 30+. If you are married even better. ACS. **Tel: 0906 515 3014 Box 424543**

WANTED gent 50-76 for cosy nights in, good times, call or text me, you won't be sorry. I'm attractive and have lots to offer. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425339**

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. **Tel: 0906 515 3030 Box 408291**

LINDA, 48yrs attractive brunette seeks gent for laughter, wining dining. Age unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425337**

50YRS, old attractive lady. Sheila, caring honest, seeks discreet gent. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422469**

OCTAVIA, black seductress, 53yrs, waiting to meet you. Pls text me today. **Text Only. Mailbox: 4090520**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 422365**

AMANDA, slim blonde, 50s seeks discreet gent for special times, mutually beneficial to us both. Call now. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425327**

CORRINE, genuine advertiser seeking adult fun, no time wasters pls. I will respond to all msgs. **Text Only. Mailbox: 4035196**

LOVING lady, romantic and tactile seeks like minded gent for special times, lets make each other feel special. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425325**

PHILIPPA, feminine open minded lady seeking adult fun, genuine responses only pls, no time-wasters. **Text Only: Mailbox: 4030610**

ATTRACTIVE Caribbean lady 59yrs, very jolly and fun seeking gent any age who must love good times. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425323**

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady, young looking 60s, genuine and kind, seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424671**

HELEN, mid 50s naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424493**

CAROL, mid 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told)! Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424783**

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls and texts answered. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424775**

BRUNETTE lady, 70, slim, sophisticated, size 10, kind of like Helen Mirren as a brunette, lives near Tunbridge Wells, WLTM a genuine, hopefully family oriented gentleman, for genuine friendship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424877**

SARAH, mature feminine lady, kind caring but still has a sensual side, hoping to meet like minded, confident, non smoking gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424777**

SUE, outgoing lady, enjoys life, likes meals, holidays, WLTM mature gentleman to share interests and spend quality time together. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424669**

CLARE, 41, attractive, lovely eyes, nice figure, smoker, likes beach walks, socialising, occasional gigs, WLTM a nice gent, any age over 40, for wining and dining, to be my soul mate. **Tel No; 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424595**

JULIE, 53yrs, tall slim dark haired lady, sociable and fun loving. New to the area so WLTM men friends for fun, maybe more. **Tel No; 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424497**

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks male companion for nights out, dining, maybe more. ACA or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424495**

PRESENTABLE divorced lady, young 60, many interests, animal lover, seeks outgoing, cheerful, honest, smart looking man, for cultural times. **Text only Mailbox: 5576629**

Men Seeking

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PROFESSIONAL gentleman, 64, widowed, own house, loves holidays abroad, reading, eating out, eating in and shows, WLTM a lady of similar age to share interests and happy times together hopefully leading to lasting relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425787**

MALE, 70s, would like to meet slim lady 60 plus. **Text only. Mailbox: 4505135**

HELLO, mature gentleman looking for a lady who is caring, likes holidays, karaoke, meals out, country walks and cinema. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425401**

GUY, 50, 6ft tall, calm and kind, good company, seeking lovely lady for good times and fun and loving. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425369**

BARRY, 50, 6ft 4ins, well built, divorced gent, looking to date calm and kind lovely lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421195**

CHRIS, 49yrs honest gent seeks lady 45-55 for socialising, friendship, maybe leading to romance. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425345**

PETER, sincere solvent gent 70s seeks lady to wine dine, foreign travel, all expenses paid. I would love a traveling companion. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425343**

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and Kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425335**

WENDY, 44yrs, dark haired beauty with blue eyes and a fab figure. WLTM gent any age, give me a call and I promise to call you back, or text/email. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424339**

MELANIE, 49yrs, varied interests, attractive, sensual lady seeks gent any age or status, call, see what happens. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424337**

CALLING all Gentlemen! I'm Janet a mature solvent stylish lady, I'm waiting for you to call me so we can wine/dine and have some good times ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424335**

HI I'm Angie, attractive petite mid 50s lady. I'm a very very active lady, with lots of interests. WLTM chap with GSOH, looks/age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424333**

WIDOW, 62, short, looking for friendship at present, interested? Ha ha got to phone to find out more! Call Jan. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424195**

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425333**

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gent WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous pls call me. Single mums welcome. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425331**

GENUINE gentleman, family minded, kind, generous seeks lady 55-75 for wining, dining and wine and laughter. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425329**

NICE looking 55 year old male WLTM sincere lady, any age, for friendship, outings, holidays abroad etc. Love the sun. **Text only. Mailbox: 4922399**

DENTAL practitioner, 44, 6ft, slim, athletic build, thick dark hair, blue eyes, loves sports, seeks slim feminine sporty lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425087**

EDWARD, 77, looking for a companion South East area of Kent, for holidays, days out, social events, and lots more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423039**

TALL, lively old boy, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks tactile lady for company and jolly jaunts. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425021**

MALE, 58, wishes to meet attractive female, into music, live bands, cinema and some sports, for nights out socialising and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424979**

HI I'm Darren, down to earth guy, lives in Kent, likes Marbaia, looking for someone special to meet and have a laugh with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424951**

GARETH handsome 40's pilot, strong tall build, seeks daytime discreet passion with lady 30-65. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414421**

NICK, mature male, builder, tattoos, plenty of money, looking for discreet meets, no stings in the Kent area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424787**

RETIRED, intelligent, Broadstairs widower, GSOH, medium height and build, seeks slim lady for friendship and companionship initially. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424697**

59YR old male, likes country walks, pub lunches, seeks lady for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424685**

MALE 50 seeks mature, homeloving lady, 60 plus who enjoys cosy nights in. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424683**

MARTIN trustworthy, warm hearted, loving, reliable male, 45, 6ft, medium build, young at heart, GSOH, seeks female, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424681**

MARK 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424679**

CARING 55yr old male, widower, 6ft 3ins, WLTM lady, 40-55 for fun and laughter, maybe happy ever after. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424677**

COLIN, 56, 6ft, medium build, clean and tidy with a tidy beard, I'm after some tlc with no strings adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422359**

ANDY, tall attractive male, looking for a naughty female, for fun with no strings attached. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424295**

MALE, 52, quiet nature, likes coastal walks, cinema, reading, WLTM lady for friendship and maybe romance. East Kent area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424211**

RICHARD, 64, n/s, from Kent, medium build, clean shaven, likes classic cars, days out, meals out, boot fares, most things, would like to meet a lady for company and to share each others interests. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424207**

JOHN, 70, widower, lives in Broadstairs, Kent, slim, fit, active, young at heart, kind, caring and loving, likes country/beach walks, holidays, days out, theatre, eating out, music, animals, WLTM slim, attractive lady, to share interests and nice times together. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424043**

LIVELY old boy, ohoc, near sea in Folkestone, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks lady companion/lover, 58-68 yo. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422621**

HELLO my name is Paul, 43, 5ft9, from Sittingbourne in Kent, looking for someone to have some fun with and see where it goes! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422905**

GENTLEMAN, 76yrs old, clean shaven with a good head of hair and a smart dresser, hoping to meet lady for friendship/relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423645**

DAVE genuine guy, 6ft, black hair, blue eyes, medium build, likes sports, gardening, music, seeks female with GSOH and genuine. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 388372**

BRIAN, 6ft3, fit, bit grey but genuine and kind, looking for a naughty female, for no strings adult fun, if you're interested please get back to me, aca. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423483**

MALE, 53, 5ft6, single, hardworking, looking for slim/small lady, 40-56. Maidstone, Kent. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423363**

OUTGOING male, seeking attractive female, likes sports, music, cinema and nights out. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414793**

ANDREW, 50, slim to medium build, lives in Ashford/Kent area, WLTM a women, 40-70, for discreet fun, would be great to hear from you so get back to find out more! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423271**

TALL single early 60's male looking for pure hearted lady for LTR. **Text only Mailbox: 5496781**

GARY, 53, caring, likes snooker, bowls, looking for a nice woman to meet and fall in love with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423145**

Gay Seeking

Join our Gay online service **FREE** visit: ***localgaydate.co.uk***

GAY guy, friendly with a GSOH, likes sport and art, WLTM similar guy for a relationship. **Tel No; 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425563**

SIMON, 29yrs, gay curious, seeking older gent for new experiences, must be discreet as I live at home. **Text Only: Mailbox: 4196422**

JAMES, 34, seeks dominant, slim, Canterbury/Thanet male, 30-40, likes reading, music, walking, films, eating out, nights in, looking for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424485**

Friends

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. **Text only to Mailbox No:4748240**

SEEKING ladies for good company, socialising and a bit of fun, BBW local to Kent, get in touch and lets start having fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413623**

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Walliams took inspiration from own grans for Gansta Granny

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

BORING: Ben has to spend Fridays at his boring, cabbage-smelling Grandma's house

WHEN actor, writer and comedian David Walliams was a boy he used to sit captivated at the knees of his two grandmas as they span him tales of their lives.

Decades later, he decided to replicate this special bond by writing his best-selling novel Gangsta Granny. Following the novel's success, it has now been transformed into a theatre show, which is coming to Tunbridge Wells.

Gangsta Granny opens with Ben having to visit his boring old grandma. Ben has to spend every Friday night with his gran while his parents go ballroom dancing - and it's always an ordeal of cabbage soup and Scrabble. Then one day he finds a tin filled with diamonds and gems which leads to the amazing discovery that his granny was once an international jewel thief. They decide to embark on the biggest heist ever to steal the Crown Jewels and the adventure of their lifetime begins.

While Mr Walliam's grannies were no mobsters, like the granny in the story, he admits that he did take a touch of inspiration from them.

"Sometimes I would selfishly think spending lots of time with my grandmas was boring but when I got them on a subject like living in London during the Second World War when bombs were rainging down, they would become very animated and I would be enthralled. I realised everyone has a story to tell," he said.

The author even added cheeky elements of their characters to his Gangsta Granny.

"There was definitely a smell of cabbages in one of my Grandma's houses," Mr Walliams admits. "The other did break wind like a duck quacking when she walked across the room."

But they were also greatly loved - just as there is a special bond between Ben and his gran.

"I think grandparents love being grandparents because they get to give the children back to the parents," laughs Mr Walliams. "Children love spending time with their grandparents because hearing their stories and being allowed to stay up past their bedtime."

The show is coming to the Assembly Hall from June 21 to 25.

Visit assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk

BGT star dons dreamcoat

BRITAIN'S Got Talent's Lucy Kay will return as the narrator in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat coming to Dartford's Orchard Theatre from February 7 to 11.

Visit orchardtheatre.co.uk

Dylan tribute is rolling in

A SHOW celebrating the life and music of rock legend and Nobel-prize winner Bob Dylan is rolling into Chatham.

The show appears at Chatham's Central Theatre February 11. Call the box office on 01634 338338 or book online via tickets.medway.gov.uk

Busted headed our way

BE quick, but there are still some tickets for Busted's only Kent show in Folkestone next month available.

The band will rock into the Leas Cliff Hall for one night on Tuesday, February 7.

Party on in Wham!sgate

A SPECIAL club night to celebrate the life and times of George Michael, takes place at Ramsgate Music Call next Friday.

Wham!sgate takes place from 8pm on February 3 and will feature DJs spinning a selection of the late performer's biggest hits. Entry is free. The star died on Christmas Day.

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Strictly's Brendan on tour

BRENDAN Cole Live Tour All Night Long is strictly the hottest ticket at Dartford's Orchard Theatre on February 23.

For more information on the Strictly stars's show and tickets visit orchardtheatre.co.uk

Hever gets itself in a flap

HEVER Castle & Gardens is teaming up with the RSPB to celebrate British garden birds during the February half term holiday.

Following on the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch and the Big School's Birdwatch Week families will flock between February 11-19 for Living with Birds, aimed at children.

Marti's caught in La Cage

MARTI WEBB stars in Bill Kenwright's La Cage Aux Folles coming to Dartford's Orchard Theatre from May 9 to 13.

To book tickets or for more information visit orchardtheatre.co.uk.

Ramblin' Man add rockers

EXTREME, Dokken, and Rival Sons will accompany headliners ZZ Top at this year's Ramblin' Man Festival in Maidstone's Mote Park on July 29 and 30.

For tickets or more information on other bands and camping, visit ramblinmanfair17.eventbrite.co.uk/

Hopelessly devoted to Grease phenomenon

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

GREASE is the word, as the sensational musical hit will be jiving onto Dartford's theatre stage later this year, complete with a recently announced star-studded cast.

Casting for the tour includes The Wanted's Tom Parker who makes his musical theatre debut playing Danny Zuko, Over the Rainbow winner Danielle Hope who plays Sandy, and EastEnders' and Strictly Come Dancing's Louisa Lytton who plays Rizzo.

Since opening on Broadway in 1972 and the smash hit movie starring John Travolta and Olivia Netown-John, Grease's place has been firmly established in the cultural Hall of Fame, having seduced the hearts of millions with its back-to-back sizzling tunes.

It's the original high-school musical featuring everyone's favourite characters - Sandy, Danny, the groovy T Birds, the sassy Pink Ladies and the whole gang at Rydell High - and all the unforgettable songs from the hit movie including You're The One That I Want, Grease Is The Word, Summer Nights, Hopelessly Devoted to You, Sandy, and Grease Lightnin'.

Parker has amassed worldwide success with his band The Wanted, achieving two UK number ones and nine top 10 singles as well as four Billboard 100 singles, with Glad You Came placing in the top five and selling over 900,000 records.

Ms Hope made her professional debut as Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz at the London Palladium, after capturing the hearts of the country and winning the BBC's smash hit Over The Rainbow having competed against over 9,000 girls.

Ms Lytton is best known for playing innocent schoolgirl Ruby Allen in EastEnders. She also reached the quarter-finals in the fourth series of Strictly Come Dancing.

The show will be at The Orchard Theatre from November 21 – 25.

To book tickets visit orchardtheatre.co.uk or call 01322 220000.

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No need for takeaway when you can fry it right

Ella Walker speaks to Chinese cooking duo, the Chans, about how easy the craved dishes are to cook

MY LOCAL Chinese takeaway knows me by name.

But that might be about to change, thanks to a new opus of Chinese cooking from husband and wife duo, Diora Fong, 65 and Kei Lum Chan, 75.

The pair have written China: The Cookbook, a collection of 650 recipes from across every province in China.

The book is the work of a lifetime spent exploring, tasting and collecting ideas, and took two years to pull together in a bound form.

They're in the midst of a mad dash round the globe when we meet, but aren't showing the jet lag; the Chans are experts when it comes to travelling.

"When we go somewhere new, the first thing we do is to always go to the market to see what there is and what we can buy, then we go to a bookshop and do some research - and then we go eat," says Kei Lum happily.

This is a man who, in his eighth decade, gets up at 4am every day to start work on developing new recipes.

His and Diora's work ethic is beyond impressive, but I quickly learn it's a misconception that Chinese cooking is nightmarishly difficult.

We meet at Asian and oriental cookery school, School of Wok in central London's Covent Garden, with host, head chef and founder, the perennially chipper Jeremy Pang, and it's the prep that's the work says Pang.

QUICK: Most of the cooking time goes into preparation

He explains how the first 45 minutes of most School of Wok cookery classes are spent chopping and dicing ingredients.

We're presented with platters containing everything we need, from soy sauce and garlic, to dehydrated mushrooms and dried scallops, a stupendously expensive delicacy that tastes similar to crab.

Even the dumpling wrappers are shop-bought, with Kei Lum admitting he doesn't bother making his own either.

We take the smooth rounds of dough and Kei Lum demonstrates how to pack them with ground pork and herbs, and then create origami-like pleats in a robust ridge, like on a pasty, so they stay watertight when boiled or steamed.

However, my efforts are nowhere near so dainty as Diora's but slowly my pleats begin to fan rather pleasingly, and an hour later, when we sit down to eat, they've actually held their shape and aren't remotely waterlogged.

Plain rice is tricky enough on its own without making it egg fried rice but Kei Lum's got it down to an art. We must, he tells us, use cold rice and crack an egg directly into it, forking it through until every grain looks like a "golden nugget" - don't add the egg to the pan when frying.

After this cooking demonstration, it's safe to say my local Chinese takeaway is going to be feeling rather neglected from now on.

Magical Potter night

THE THIRD annual Harry Potter Book Night will be celebrated throughout the world on February 2, and Maidstone Waterstones is joining the party.

Young wizards, witches and muggles will be treated to an evening of games, activities, readings and quizzes, and each person will be sorted into their house via the Sorting Hat.

Tickets for the night are free. To book contact maidstone@waterstones.com

History of The Drifters

STAND BY ME, the musical history of The Drifters, is coming to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall on March 24.

Originally formed in 1953, they enjoyed decades of success in various different incarnations, most notably the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

The show features some of the groups hits including Under The Boardwalk.

For tickets visit assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk.

Cathedral's organists

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL has announced the line-up of the international renowned performers who will join the 2017 season of organ recitals.

It will be the last season using the current organ before it is removed and rebuilt.

Adrian Bawtree, James O'Donnell, David Newsholme, David Flood and Robert Quinney, will play recitals from February 11 to June 22. Tickets available on the door.

Show to Raven about

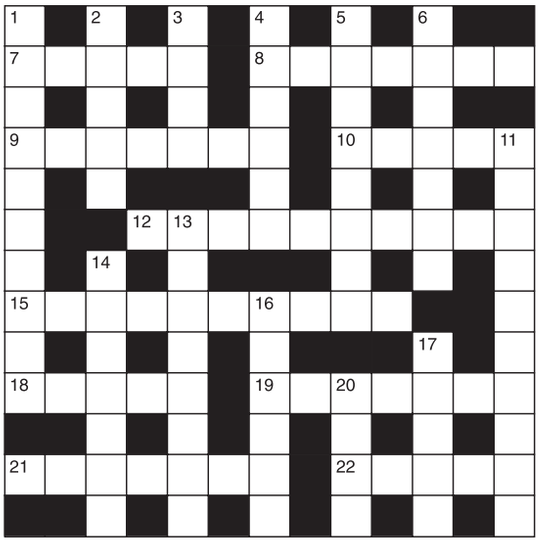
POPULAR magician, Jamie Raven, is heading to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall on February 9 following a special series of intimate shows at The Magic Circle in London.

Mr Raven burst onto the magic scene during the 2015 series of ITV1's Britain's Got Talent.

For tickets visit assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk or call 01892 53063.

PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across

7. Malice (5)
8. Take counsel (7)
9. Idleness (7)
10. Power (5)
12. Dormancy (10)
15. Odious (10)
18. Dodge (5)
19. Sorrow (7)
21. Sideboard (7)
22. Flood (5)

Down

1. Digest (10)
2. Bolt (5)
3. Tidy (4)
4. Abrade (6)
5. Hostile (8)
6. Acrid (7)
11. Intruder (10)
13. Cosmos (8)
14. Comforted (7)
16. Ridiculous (6)
17. Postpone (5)
20. Twilight (4)

Cryptic

Across

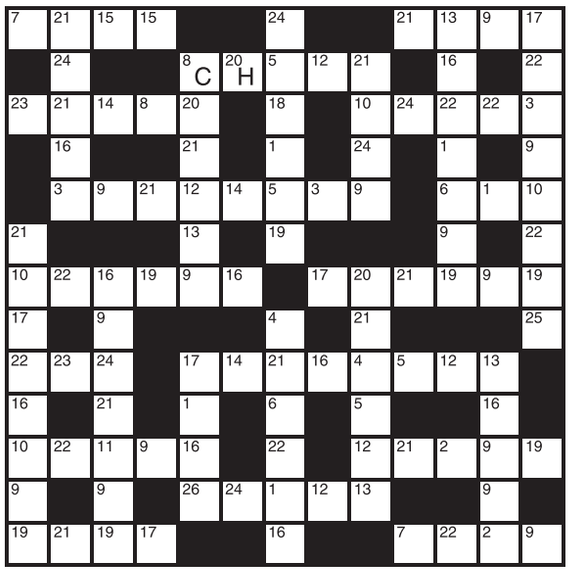
7. Nimble one kept in by a broken leg (5)
8. Letter of introduction (7)
9. State crime that ruins the senator (7)
10. One big noise in the Muslim world (5)
12. About a garment specially designed for amusement (10)
15. Doesn't forget about prayers (10)
18. What the questing rangers do in "Captains Courageous" (5)
19 and 2Dn. They indicate some relief for the geographer (7,5)
21. Those who gamble on footballers (7)
22. Is inclined to terminate in back street (5)

Down

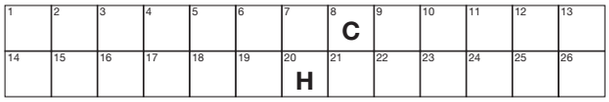
1. Factory below ground making fortifications (10)
2. See 19 Across.
3. See 20 Down.
4. Communist returns around the hostelry for a meal (6)
5. Man of action! (8)
6. The rogue gets in beneath the house (7)
11. One whose ability is demonstrated by a good show of hands (10)
13. Blows up the shot! (8)
14. Bill will produce a report (7)
16. Do some boxing and make a scene, maybe (6)
17. What jumpers do when restricted by the ropes (5)
20 and 3Dn. Musicians won't be without paper money (8)

CODEWORD

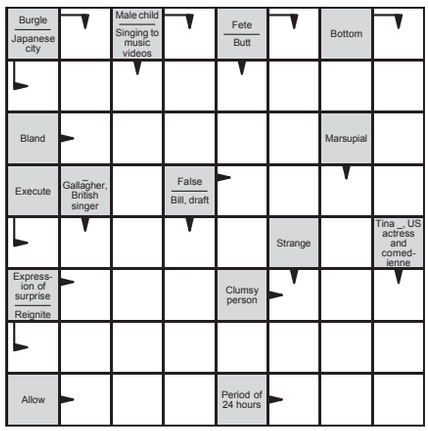
This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



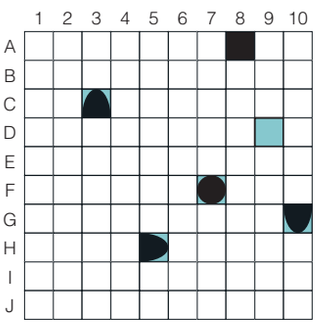
Arrowword



Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

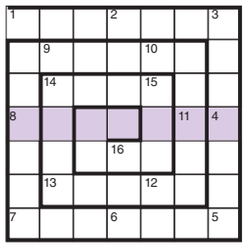
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.



THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine

Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Nought
2. Cry of pain
3. Chop wildly
4. Type
5. Not alive
6. Consider
7. Unmarried woman
8. Cast off
9. Rush
10. Cure
11. Luxuriant
12. Snake sound
13. Broth
14. Tablet
15. Weaving machine
16. Offend

Keyword clue: A English county

SUDOKU

Hard

		1	6		7	5		
								9
		2	9		4	7		
1								4
	4		8		2		6	
5								8
		8	4		3	6		
				7				
		3	1		6	9		

Easy

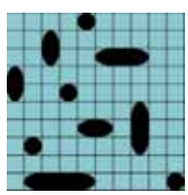
8			2		3		9	1
3	1		7	6			4	
		6				3		
		8		1			2	
9	2		4		8		7	
	3			9				4
		2				4		
	4			2	1		3	5
7	5		9	4			1	8

Solutions

Arrowword

		R		S		G		B
Y	O	K	O	H	A	M	A	
		B	A	N	A	L		S
	R	E	F	A	K	E		
E	N	A	C	T		O		
	O	O	H		O	A	F	
R	E	K	I	N	D	L	E	
	L	E	T		D	A	Y	

Battleships



Double Crossword

Cryptic
Across: 7 Agile; 8 Initial; 9 Treason; 10 Islam; 12 Recreation; 15 Recollects; 18 Scour; 19 Contour; 21 Punters; 22 Tends.
Down: 1 Earthworks; 2 Lines; 3 Less; 4 Dinner; 5 Litigant; 6 Villain; 11 Malicurist; 13 Enlarges; 14 Account; 16 Encase; 17 Bound; 20 Note.

Quick
Across: 7 Spite; 8 Consult; 9 Inertia; 10 Might; 12 Quiescence; 15 Abominable; 18 Evade; 19 Sadness; 21 Dresser; 22 Spate.
Down: 1 Assimilate; 2 Rivet; 3 Neat; 4 Scrape; 5 Inimical; 6 Pungent; 11 Trespasser; 13 Universe; 14 Solaced; 16 Absurd; 17 Delay; 20 Dusk.

Codeword
1=U, 2=K, 3=M, 4=V, 5=I, 6=P, 7=J, 8=C, 9=E, 10=B, 11=X, 12=N, 13=G, 14=T, 15=Z, 16=R, 17=S, 18=O, 19=Q, 20=H, 21=A, 22=O, 23=W, 24=L, 25=Y, 26=F

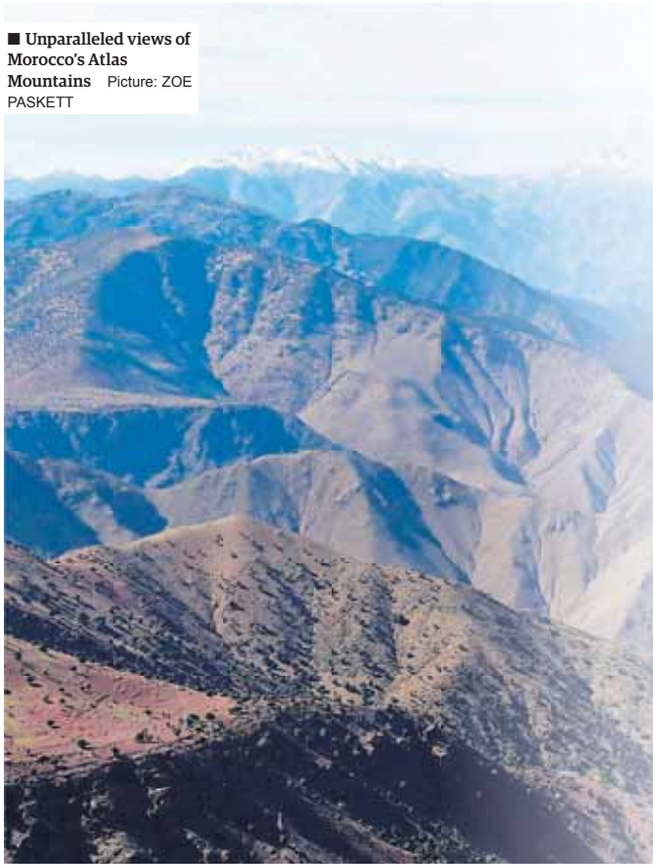
Word Spiral
1 Zero; 2 Ouch; 3 Hack; 4 Kind; 5 Dead; 6 Deem; 7 Miss; 8 Shed; 9 Dash; 10 Heal; 11 Lush; 12 Hiss; 13 Soup; 14 Pill; 15 Loom; 16 Mitt. **Keyword:** Suffolk

Sudoku - Hard

4	9	1	6	3	7	5	8	2
7	6	5	2	1	8	4	3	9
8	3	2	9	5	4	7	1	6
1	8	9	3	6	5	2	7	4
3	4	7	8	9	2	1	6	5
9	7	6	4	2	3	6	5	1
6	1	4	5	7	9	8	2	3
5	2	8	7	4	1	3	9	6
2	5	3	1	8	6	9	4	7

Sudoku - Easy

8	7	4	2	5	3	6	9	1
3	1	5	7	6	9	8	4	2
2	9	6	1	8	4	3	5	7
4	6	8	5	1	7	9	2	3
5	3	7	6	9	2	1	8	4
9	2	1	4	3	8	5	7	6
6	4	9	8	2	1	7	3	5
1	8	2	3	7	5	4	6	9
7	5	3	9	4	6	2	1	8



■ Unparalleled views of Morocco's Atlas Mountains Picture: ZOE PASKETT

Make a winter break for it in Marrakech

Marrakech is at its best off season with mild temperatures and fewer crowds but the same great tagine, finds **ZOE PASKETT**

You haven't truly experienced travel until you've been naked in a very hot spa with a lot of people you hardly know, don't you agree? Marrakech wasn't the first time I did this. But it was the first time I'd been to Marrakech.

The colder English months are the perfect time for a north African retreat: it's not tanning weather, but it beats the cold we're getting.

Hang out by the beach in Agadir or Essaouira if you wish, but at a comfortable 20 degrees, Marrakech's winding Medina streets and hidden palaces are at their best off season.

I stayed at newly opened Mövenpick Hotel Mansour Eddahbi Marrakech, 15 minutes from the airport. It's Saray and Medi Terra restaurants serve a bit of whatever you fancy and every day, there's Chocolate Hour - a table of treats are constantly replenished until the hour is up. I plan to campaign to get this instituted at work.

And you haven't had tagine until you've had it on a roof terrace in the middle of the mountains. My favourite thing about Marrakech is the ability to travel out of the city, getting glimpses of the Atlas Mountains in the distance.

A 4x4 tour to the peaks gives outstanding views.

We stopped to enjoy some tea and bread with a local Berber family – with honey from the bees down the road, bread made at the house and the most delicious crumbly butter from the cow we met downstairs. Magical.

How to get there

Rooms at the upscale Mövenpick Hotel Mansour Eddahbi Marrakech start from £125 per night based on two sharing, including breakfast and taxes. For reservations visit movenpick.com or call: 0800 898 317. easyJet flies to Marrakech, from London Gatwick, Bristol and Manchester with fares from £31.99 one way, including taxes. Flights can be booked at easyJet.com.
Complete Tours offer a variety of excursions in Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains. For more information, visit complete-tours.com

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Regeneration and its funding

THERE are many issues raised in KoS on many parts of Kent, but rarely on Swale - Sittingbourne, Sheppey and Faversham.

The local council is undertaking a much needed regeneration of the town centre of Sittingbourne. However to the concern of many residents it is being funded by Swale Borough Council taking out a £28m loan secured on local residents.

The same council has declined to respond to many questions raised by its own scrutiny committee trying to find out more details on the loan.

The stated justification for this loan is the revenue to be generated by rents and rates from businesses attracted to the 'off town centre' development.

The concerns are, first the council is stepping well outside it's area of expertise in managing the borrowing of such a large sum of money and trying to manage an estate of, as yet largely unnamed, retailers and leisure interests.

Secondly why has the private sector shown no interest in taking up this 'attractive' revenue generating opportunity?

The local MP Gordon Henderson remains remarkably quiet on the whole issue.

Interestingly both Sittingbourne Regeneration and Dreamland projects both experience a single party dominated council and are thus less subject to scrutiny.

Paul Otto,
Sittingbourne

NHS needs help and needs it now

THE NHS has been brought down to its knees by the recent cold weather - all it takes is one or two days of ice and snow.

Like so many readers of your newspaper, I am very worried that the NHS isn't going to be there to look after them when they need it the most. We need more NHS funding right now to fix the urgent crisis before it's too late.

Please, if anyone who is reading this letter has any influence whatsoever, the NHS needs more funding NOW before it goes over the tipping point.

Yes there are lots of arguments as to why. But now is not the time to argue.

Richard Bloom,
Ashford

Are we not able to be quiet now?

IF the trend to honour people with a minute's applause - such was the recent case for the football manager Graham Taylor - continues, may we expect a round of applause at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday?

Why oh why do we submit to the mindless minority, who even for one minute, fail to stay silent?

S Reeves,
Herne Bay

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Don't miss chance to back Manston revival

AS reported in last week's KoS. Thanet District Council has just launched an eight-week public consultation regarding updates to the draft local plan.

Putting aside the rights and wrongs of the issue, TDC have decided that, as things stand, they do not have sufficient evidence for Manston to retain its status as an airport. Instead they are consulting on alternative plans to re-designate the airport site as a huge 2,500+ housing estate with accompanying business units.

These additional homes will undoubtedly lead to more local congestion, more competition for local services and more pressure on local resources in an already suffering Thanet.

Unemployment in Thanet is the highest in Kent so where are the jobs for these extra residents? The direst consequence, however, would be the permanent loss of our most valuable and important asset - the 2,752 metre runway with the associated lost capability for inward investment and employment. This would be an enormous loss not only for Thanet but for the south east generally.

We would urge all supporters of Manston Airport to object to the proposed housing development on the airport site and to stipulate their desire to see the retention of aviation status. There will be seven separate roadshow events, put on by TDC, which the public can attend and where they can ask questions and give their views.

The dates and venues for these events are being widely advertised. There is also an opportunity to give your views on the TDC planning portal at www.consult.thanet.gov.uk. This is the most legitimate, effective and appropriate way of voicing your opinion. The way forward for Manston, for Thanet, is as an airport, not as a housing estate. Please exercise your right and have your say.

Supporters of Manston Airport

Let Brexit be as hard as we voted

AS an active Brexit campaigner I want the UK to secure a hard Brexit in 2017 as that is the mandate and instruction the British people gave the government.

Free trade with no fee for entering the declining EU market will occur because the Europeans and especially the Germans and French need access to the increasingly prosperous UK, where the premonitions of doom and gloom of the Remain campaign have been shown to be false.

Over 60 per cent of our laws are under the "competence" of the corrupt and unaccountable EU meaning that in these areas our MPs and government have no redress on our behalf.

Europe only has freedom because of the English speaking peoples and it is Nato, not the EEC or EU, that keeps us free.

It was the clumsiness of Brussels that was the catalyst for the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

Let us regain our once rich seas and stop our subsidising of European farmers.

Let us also inspire the many other peoples of this continent to regain their own freedom, democratically elected governments and prosperity. The stopping of free movement of people is non-negotiable.

We are an outward facing people and a great global trading nation of renown.

Let us have a government that is accountable to us alone, a nation that is free, courts that are there to implement British laws and let us yet again become an even greater commercial nation across a world that, of course, speaks English.

Peter Booth,
Cheshire (former chairman of the South Thanet Conservative Association)

Fight to save key cancer treatment

IT is devastating to hear that Kadcyla – a crucial life-extending treatment for women with incurable secondary breast cancer – faces being withdrawn from the NHS, following the failure of NICE and the drug's manufacturer, Roche, to reach an agreement.

Kadcyla can offer patients precious extra months, even years, of good quality time with their loved ones, with fewer side effects than other treatments.

It is available in many other countries – including France, Germany and Australia – and unless NICE's draft decision is overturned next month, this medical advance will bypass patients in England forever.

That's why I've backed Breast Cancer Now's campaign to #KeepKadcyla, which calls on NICE and Roche to urgently reach a deal to ensure patients in England are not denied this very effective treatment.

There is very little time left for this decision to be reversed and I urge NICE and Roche to do everything in their power to keep this drug available.

Andy Hall,
Lympne

Impossible dream surely?

AM the only one wishing one day to have a Brexit free letters page in KoS?

H Smith,
Tonbridge

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

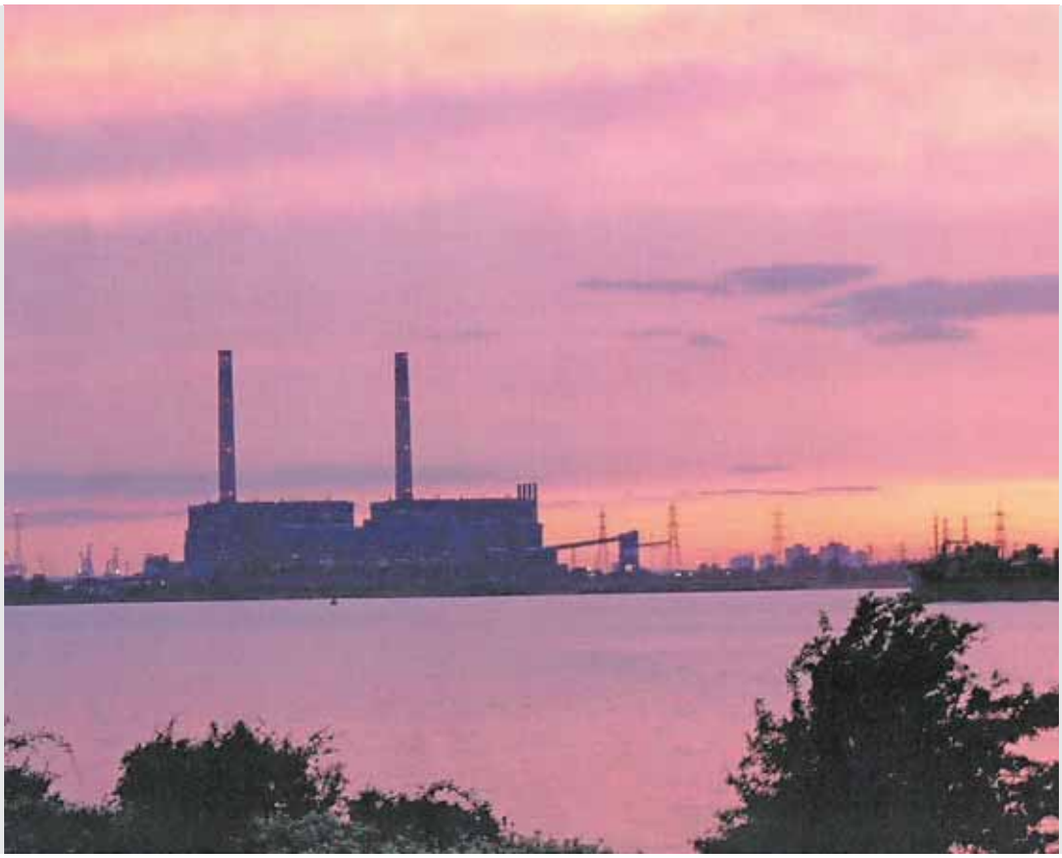
AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent



Looking across the Thames to Tilbury

by **Pamela Penfold from Rainham**

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Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 31.0 (9.1) to 72.4 (3.9); Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4) to 88.3 (3.2); Combined 38.2 (7.4) to 80.7 (3.5). CO_2 emissions for the ŠKODA range are 170 to 90 g/km. Standard EU test figures are for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

driving

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

BIG: The Kodiaq has a large load space, below, and significantly under cuts its main rivals in the market making the SUV's arrival hotly anticipated

Skoda's bear looks all set to roar in SUV market

SKODA was distancing itself from its past as a value brand, yet just crashed into the big seven-seat SUV market with a bargain contender.

Called the Kodiaq – after the supersize Kodiak Bear found on the Kodiak Islands of Alaska – it is big brother to the Czech brand's highly successful mid-size SUV (sports utility vehicle) the Yeti, also named after an inhabitant of snowy wastes – albeit a mythical one.

Like its namesake, the Kodiaq towers over obvious rivals: for price (from just £21,495) and quality it beats the Nissan X-Trail, Kia Sorento, Hyundai Santa Fe and makes premium sector rivals from Land Rover, BMW, and Skoda sister brand Audi, look expensive.

This cannot be an accident for a marque still battling tired snob values dating back to Soviet era design and quality issues: Skoda must still overcome those old prejudices, more so when tackling an entirely new market sector.

So, spec levels are high across all four trim levels - S, SE, SE L and Edition – and the Edition flagship (from £30,695) brings 19-inch alloys, leather seats, chrome roof rails, wireless phone charging and many safety features.

Apart from the 4x4 system that goes with its chunky and capable looks, the Kodiaq is also offered with front-wheel drive; once a no-no in the 4x4/SUV sector, this is now desirable to SUV buyers who want the look, plus economy too.

Five petrol and diesel engine options are offered, with manual or the excellent DSG auto gearboxes open to VW group brands.

The Kodiaq's typically clean-cut Skoda body, is just 4cm longer than the Czech marque's Octavia family model – no giant itself.

And yet the Kodiaq can seat seven and has a capacious and versatile cabin, the approach that has enabled SUVs to steal sales from the staid and declining MPV/people carrier sector.

It's due for delivery in April.

» Read more of Steve's motoring reviews in…
KENT LIFE

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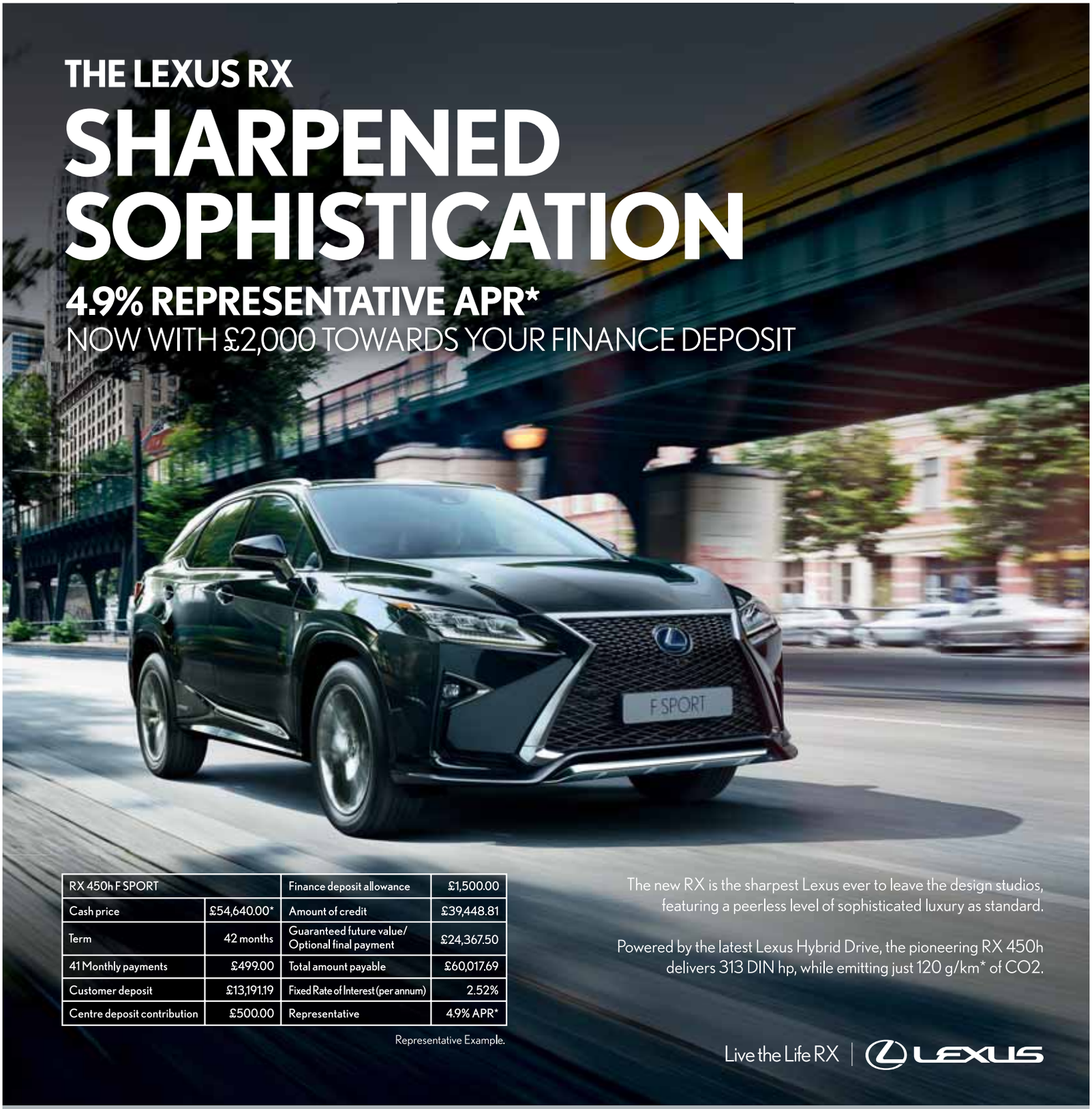

RX 450h F SPORT		Finance deposit allowance	£1,500.00
Cash price	£54,640.00*	Amount of credit	£39,448.81
Term	42 months	Guaranteed future value/ Optional final payment	£24,367.50
41 Monthly payments	£499.00	Total amount payable	£60,017.69
Customer deposit	£13,191.19	Fixed Rate of Interest (per annum)	2.52%
Centre deposit contribution	£500.00	Representative	4.9% APR*

Representative Example.

The new RX is the sharpest Lexus ever to leave the design studios, featuring a peerless level of sophisticated luxury as standard.

Powered by the latest Lexus Hybrid Drive, the pioneering RX 450h delivers 313 DIN hp, while emitting just 120 g/km* of CO2.

Live the Life RX | LEXUS

LEXUS CANTERBURY Broad Oak Road, Canterbury CT2 7PX 01227 388 585 www.canterbury.lexus.co.uk

LEXUS TUNBRIDGE WELLS Dowding Way, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3UY 01892 598 870 www.tunbridgewells.lexus.co.uk

RX 450h prices start from £48,495. Model shown is RX 450h F SPORT £54,640, includes optional metallic paint at £645.
*4.9% APR Representative, £1,500 Finance Deposit Allowance, £500 Centre contribution, 42 months only on Lexus Connect (PCP), up to 35% deposit and Guaranteed Future Value/Optional Final Payment.RX new retail sales. Ordered and proposed for finance between 15 December 2016 and 31 March, 2017, registered and financed by 30 June 2017 through Lexus Financial Services. Participating Lexus Centres. Other finance offers available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Terms and conditions apply. 8,000 miles per annum, excess mileage charge applies over contracted miles, 17 pence per mile. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status, over 18s. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. Lexus Financial Services is a trading name of Toyota Financial Services (UK) PLC. Registered Office: Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, KT18 5UZ. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The MPG figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results. They are provided for comparability purposes, and may not reflect actual driving experience. RX 450h Luxury fuel consumption and CO_2 figures: urban 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), extra-urban 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), combined 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), 127 g/km CO_2

Sharp style delivers the best RX yet

Flagship SUV from Toyota's premium arm Lexus has changed its image with refined styling cues from its impressive little brother, the NX. And it looks good

Lexus RX 450h

Price:	£59,495
Driving appeal:	★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	BMW X5

TOYOTA'S Prius may be the world's best known hybrid, but larger petrol-electric cars have worked better.

If you are loading a car with two powertrains – piston engine and fuel plus electric motor and bulky, heavy batteries – it is easier to lose the extra within the larger dimensions and overall kerb weight of a big saloon or SUV.

And this has worked for Lexus, Toyota's premium arm.

Indeed, you might say Lexus' UK sales have survived against stiff German opposition lately thanks to its mainstay hybrid models.

So there's no doubt on the preferred choice from the marque's flagship SUV range, the RX; a hybrid 4x4 rather than the thirsty petrol turbo entry model in front-wheel drive or 4x4 format.

And the RX (from £39,995) has always been one of Lexus' strongest models, largely due to company car tax efficiency, superb build quality, reliability, good dealers, slow depreciation, generous standard kit, and overall comfort levels - but it never appealed to the image-conscious.

It could be all change now though;

taking its cue from the smaller Lexus NX SUV, the previously staid RX gained some serious attitude when the all-new version appeared last year.

The new Lexus styling palette, including big gaping grille and multi-faceted bodywork has transformed the car's visual appeal. Blacked out rear pillars even suggest the 'floating roof' effect that obsesses so many designers.

But you can't say the new look RX walks the talk.

The driving experience still favours the stolid, comfortable tastes of its primary market, North America, rather than more dynamic European ones.

Admittedly, you do get the chance to tweak throttle and suspension, but the pulse is unlikely to race,

The hybrid powertrain isn't really set up for sporty driving either, even if stabbing the throttle unleashes both petrol and electric motors and allows a 0-62mph sprint in 7.7 seconds.

The obstacle is really the CVT (continuously variable transmission) auto 'box: great for helping the car's economy but, by its very nature, it baulks at efforts to unleash the Mr Hyde in sensible Dr Jekyll.

However, if that's not your worry then the RX's appeal just got better than ever. All the old virtues remain, plus that exciting new look.

Various specifications are available, with price brackets reaching up to £59.495 for the top of the range models. Check your local dealer for details.

MOTORLINE CANTERBURY

Broad Oak Road, CANTERBURY, CT2 7PX 01227 451791 www.motorline-canterbury.co.uk

PEUGEOT RECOMMENDS TOTAL Official Fuel Consumption in MPG (l/100km) and CO_2 emissions (g/km) for the all-new 3008 SUV Range are: Urban 37.2 67.3 (7.6 - 4.2), Extra Urban 55.4 - 80.7 (5.1 - 3.5), Combined 47.1 - 70.6 (6.0 - 4.0) and CO_2 136 - 103 (g/km). MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Visit Peugeot.co.uk for more information. Information correct at time of going to print.

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The continuing growth of our business has resulted in a vacancy for the following staff:

Staff Nurse Out Patients

Margate

Part time - 30 hours per week
Salary - £26,121.29 (pro rata)
Closing date - 5th February 2017
Interview date - 8th February 2017

Qualifications and Experience

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- Evidence of continual professional development
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- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Patient Focus

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Alternatively, please contact Sarah Blaber, HR Assistant

Telephone: 01304 222690 E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Proposed development at: Land South of VIEW ROAD, CLIFFE WOODS, ROCHESTER, MEDWAY

Take notice that an application is being made by: Organisation Name: SJP Group

Applicant name: Mr A Pritchard

For planning permission to: Outline application for the erection of 50 retirement homes to meet specific need for people living in the rural communities of Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Cooling and Frindsbury. it includes a mix of 2 storey apartments and single storey bungalows together with ancillary meeting room, gymnasium, office and parking

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR.

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Signatory: Mr A Pritchard

Date: 18-01-2017

Statement of owners' rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease.

Statement of agricultural tenants' rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants' security of tenure.

'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. 'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

LICENSING ACT 2003:
Application for Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given by Mr & Mrs Varatharajan has applied to Dover District Council for full variation of the premises licence for: enable the sale of alcohol between 7.00 to 23.00 Monday to Sunday at Market Square News.10-11 Market Square .Dover Kent CT16 1NX.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations to this application must give notice in writing to the address: Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, Kent CT16 3PJ .Giving in detail the grounds of objection by: 16/02/2017

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £5,000.

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LICENSING ACT 2003:
Application for Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that MRS PRATIBHA PATEL of 41 Wife of Bath Hill Canterbury CT2 8PQ has applied to Canterbury City Council for a new Premises licence to:

For the off Sale of alcohol, Monday to Sunday 08.00-21.00. All Bank holidays / Christmas Day / New Year's Eve / New Year's Day 08:00-21:00 for the premises of The Pilgrims Shop at 1 The Merchants Way, London Road Estate, Canterbury CT2 8PW.

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at http://www.canterbury.gov.uk/licensing or at Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1YW tel. 01227 862000 by appointment with the Licensing Team between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Any person wishing to submit representations to my application must give notice in writing to the address shown above, giving in detail the grounds of objection by 23rd February 2017.

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Panel and will therefore pass into the public domain. Representations must relate to one of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

Goods Vehicle
Operator's Licence

LTS Site Services Ltd of 31 Mount Pleasant Road, Dartford. DA1 1TD is applying to use Ajacent Business Centre, Rochester airport industrial estate, 3a Laker Road, Chatham, Rochester. ME1 3QX as an operating centre for 2 goods vehicles and 0 trailers. Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hill Crest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A guide to making representations is available for the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

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Planned Millwall move thrown out

Suggestions club could relocate to Kent formally dismissed

Football

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

PLANS to relocate Millwall FC to Kent appear to be officially off the table after weeks of pressure on a south-east London council.

Lewisham Council had planned to seize land around the Lions' home ground, the Den, through a compulsory purchase order (CPO).

The proposals would have a significant impact on Millwall's academy and community trust, which led to club bosses publicly ackowledging for the first time earlier this month that it could be forced out of its current Bermondsey base, with north Kent reportedly mooted as a potential site.

Now though, the plans seem to be dead in the water, according to a statement by Lewisham's mayor, Sir Steve Bullock.

He said: "I have always been clear that Millwall must be at the heart of the development and it is my view that these concerns need to be thoroughly addressed, the CPO should not proceed and that all parties concerned should enter discussions to identify an agreed way to achieve the regeneration of this area while resolving these concerns."

Neither Gillingham chairman Paul Scally, nor Ebbsfleet United vice-chair Peter Varney thought the plans were realistic when they spoke to us earlier this month.

The Kent Sports Trust, a not-for-profit organisation which works to encourage participation in sport across the county, warned that any relocation could have had a negative impact on clubs already playing their football in Kent.

HOME: The Den will continue to host Millwall games after a planned CPO was scrapped this week Picture: GOOGLE

CEO Steve Wolfe told us: "Fans don't have too much choice to see a lot of top-flight football in the county at the moment.

"Had Millwall moved into Kent, though, it could have had a detrimental effect not only on both Gillingham and Charlton Athletic, but also on clubs like Dartford and Ebbsfleet United who have worked hard to build up their fan base from within the local community.

"At the end of the day, I want to see more people participating in sport."

Sheppey pro boxing debut delayed by injuries

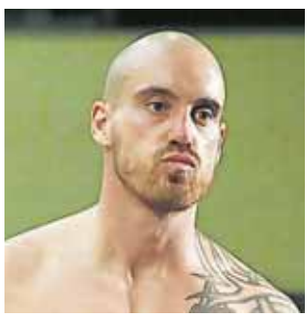
Boxing

INJURIES to headline fighters have robbed the Isle of Sheppey of the opportunity to host professional boxing for the first time.

JE Promotions' 'Swampy Revenge' show was due to roll into the newly-built Oasis Academy on February 4, but a last-minute injury sustained by bill-topper Dave Jones, from Queenborough, and a withdrawal from Strood's Louis Greene meant bosses felt they had to pull the plug.

Jones, 35, was due to return to the ring for the first time since winning the International Challenge belt back in June.

Meanwhile, another Invicta Gym member – unbeaten middleweight



HEADLINER: Dave Jones

Oli Edwards - was also scheduled to appear on the night but has now switched dates to the next JE Promotions show in Maidstone on February 25 instead.

The 22-year-old from Sheerness comes into the fifth fight of his fledgling career full of confidence after securing his first career stoppage in just 24 seconds on October 29 last year in Maidstone against Hungarian opponent Laszlo Kovacs II.

The next outing will mark the end of his first two years in the paid ranks since debuting back in March 2015.

JE Promotions' figurehead Joe Elfidh said: "We had to pull the show, but I promised Dave and Oli that we would have a show in their area and I'm a man of my word so we will arrange the next date as soon as we can.

"The New Era show in Maidstone is there for the boys from Sheerness to jump on instead, so luckily Oli can still get out and get another win."

Sport Shorts

» Email **sports@kosmedia.co.uk** or call **Tom Pyman** on **01233653477**

Former spinner Patel named 2nd XI coach

MIN Patel has been appointed coach of Kent's second XI.

The Dartford-born 46-year-old spinner spent his entire career in the county while also featuring on the international stage for England, playing in two tests in 1996.

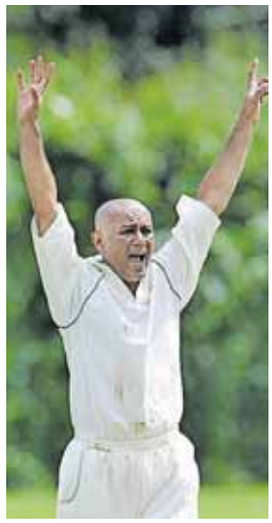
Patel has coached the county's spinners since his retirement and is looking forward to his new full-time role.

"I enjoyed my time immensely in 2016 as second XI coach as an extension of my work with the spinners in the first-team squad and academy," he said.

"There's a great deal of talent in the squad and I look forward to helping bring through players to excel in the first XI."

Jason Weaver, 48, will oversee the pathway from the age-group teams to the prolific Kent Cricket Academy programme after 10 years as high performance manager.

CEO Jamie Clifford said: "We're delighted to appoint Min and Jason in their new roles on a permanent basis and it is a sign of the depth in our coaching structure."



LEGEND: Min Patel

BOSS: Gillingham head coach Ady Pennock

Pennock still on hunt to bolster Gills squad

ADY Pennock says he is continuing to talk to players over potential moves to Gillingham as the end of the transfer window looms ever closer.

The former Gills defender was due to take to the Priestfield dugout for the first time as head coach this weekend.

So far, only Czech keeper Tomas Holy has arrived at the club, after Pennock said he was looking to bring in a number of players before the end of January.

He said: "I haven't got much to say on the transfer front. We're still negotiating and we have people lined up, but it has to be right for us."

He added that Holy would provide crucial competition for fellow stoppers Stuart Nelson and Tom Hadler.

Masters heartbreak for Hawkins

BARRY Hawkins suffered Masters heartbreak last weekend as he narrowly missed out on his second successive final.

The Ditton potter reached the semi-finals at Alexandra Palace in London following impressive victories over Shaun Murphy and Mark Selby earlier in the week.

However, a clash with Joe Perry in the semis proved a step too far, as he was agonisingly edged out 6-5.

Hawkins reached the Masters final for the first time 12 months ago following a fine tournament, but was ultimately comfortably beaten by old foe Ronnie O'Sullivan, 10-1.

While there are still other tournaments to play, the 37-year-old will surely now have one eye on the world championships in Sheffield in April.

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